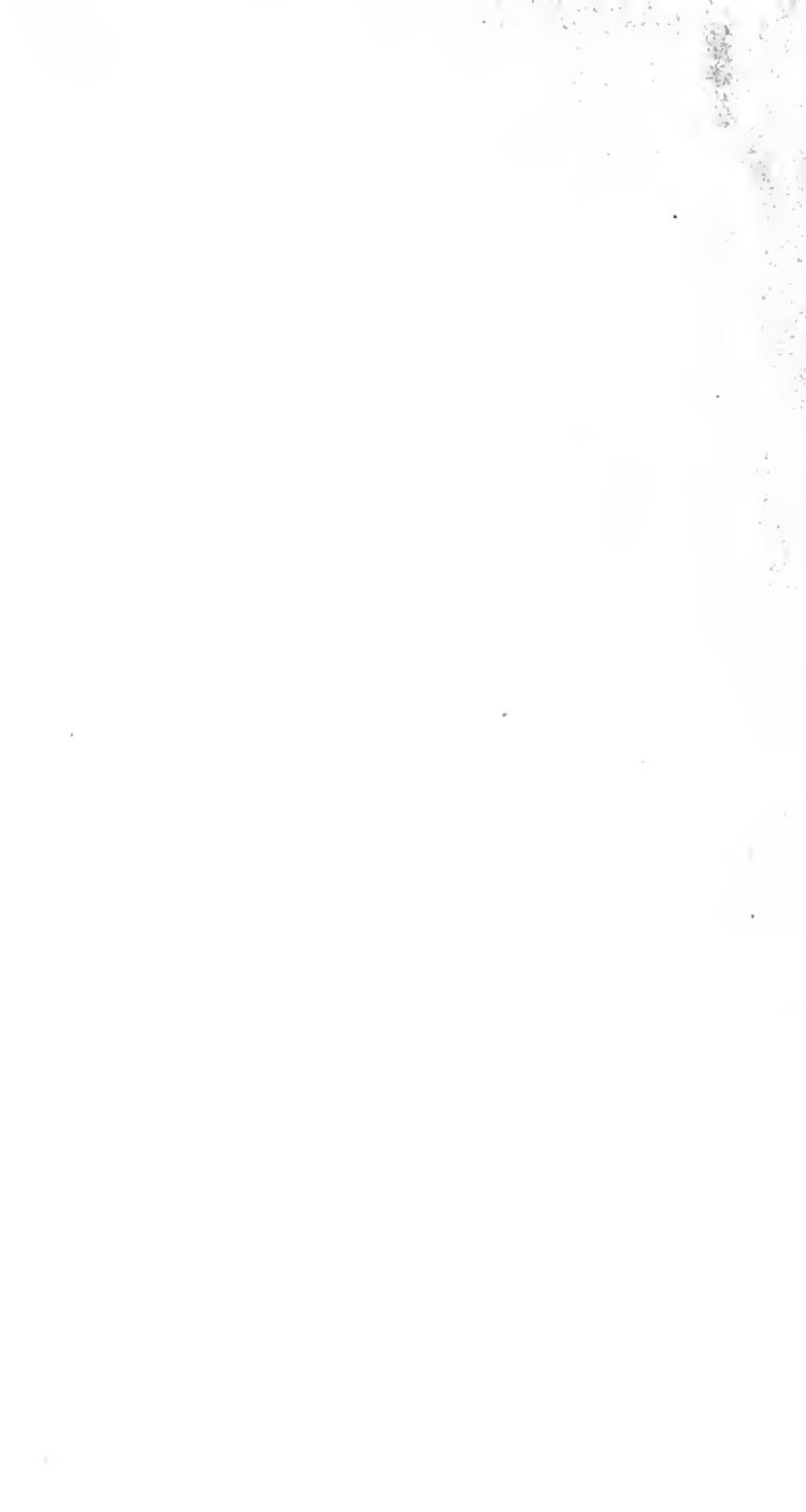


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ADDITIONS

TO THE

FOURTH AND FORMER EDITIONS

OF

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION,

&c. &c.

BY T. R. MALTHUS, A. M.

*Late Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and Professor of History and
Political Economy in the East-India College, Hertfordshire.*

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BOOK II. CHAP. VII.

[To follow Page 448, Vol. I. Edition 1807.]

Of the Checks to Population in France (continued).

I HAVE not thought it advisable to alter the conjectural calculations and suppositions of the preceding chapter, on account of the returns of the prefects for the year IX, as well as some returns published since by the government in 1813, having given a smaller proportion of births than I had thought probable; first, because these returns do not contain the early years of the revolution, when the encouragement to marriage and the proportion of births might be expected to be the greatest; and secondly, because they still seem fully to establish the main fact, which it was the object of the chapter to account for, namely, the undi-

minished population of France, notwithstanding the losses sustained during the revolution; although it may have been effected rather by a decreased proportion of deaths than an increased proportion of births.

According to the returns of the year IX, the proportions of the births, deaths, and marriages, to the whole population, are as follows:—

Births.	Deaths.	Marriages.
1 in 33	1 in 38½	1 in 157*.

But these are in fact only the proportions of one year, from which no certain inference can be drawn. They are also applied to a population between three and four millions greater than was contained in ancient France, which population may have always had a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages; and further, it appears highly probable from some of the statements in the *Analyse des Procès Verbaux*, that the registers

* See a valuable note of M. Prevost of Geneva to his Translation of this Work, vol. ii. p. 88. M. Prevost thinks it probable that there are omissions in the returns of the births, deaths, and marriages, for the year IX. He further shews that the proportion of the population to the square league

registers had not been very carefully kept. Under these circumstances, they cannot be considered as proving what the numbers imply.

In the year XI., according to the *Statistique Elementaire* by Peuchet, published subsequently to his *Essai*, an inquiry was instituted under the orders of M. Chaptal for the express purpose of ascertaining the average proportion of births to the population^a; and such an inquiry, so soon after the returns of the year IX., affords a clear proof that these returns were not considered by the minister as correct. In order to accomplish the object in view, choice was made of those communes in 30 departments distributed over the whole surface of France, which were likely to afford the most accurate returns. And these returns for the years VIII., IX., and X., gave a proportion of births as 1 in $28\frac{3}{100}$; of deaths,

league for Old France should be 1014, and not 1086. But if there is reason to believe that there are omissions in the registers, and that the population is made too great, the real proportions will be essentially different from those which are here given.

^a P. 381. Paris, 1805.

as 1 in $30\frac{9}{10}$; and of marriages, as 1 in $132\frac{7}{100}$.

It is observed by M. Peuchet that the proportion of population to the births is here much greater than had been formerly assumed, but he thinks that, as this calculation had been made from actual enumerations, it should be adopted in preference.

The returns published by the government in 1813 make the population of ancient France 28,786,911, which, compared with 28,000,000, the estimated population of the year IX., shew an increase of about 800,000 in the 11 years, from 1802 to 1813.

No returns of marriages are given, and the returns of births and deaths are given only for fifty departments.

In these fifty departments, during the ten years beginning with 1802 and ending with 1811, the whole number of births amounted to 5,478,669, and of deaths to 4,696,857, which, on a population of 16,710,719, indicates a proportion of births as 1 in $30\frac{1}{2}$, and of deaths as 1 in $35\frac{1}{2}$.

It is natural to suppose that these fifty departments were chosen on account of their shewing the greatest increase. They contain

tain indeed nearly the whole increase that had taken place in all the departments from the time of the enumeration in the year IX.; and consequently the population of the other departments must have been almost stationary. It may further be reasonably conjectured that the returns of marriages were not published on account of their being considered as unsatisfactory, and shewing a diminution of marriages, and an increased proportion of illegitimate births.

From these returns, and the circumstances accompanying them, it may be concluded, that whatever might have been the real proportion of births before the revolution, and for the six or seven subsequent years, when the *mariages prématrés* are alluded to in the Procès Verbaux, and proportions of births as 1 in 21, 22, and 23, are mentioned in the Statistique Générale, the proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, are now all considerably less than they were formerly supposed to be^a.

It has been asked, whether if this fact be allowed,

* In the year 1792 a law was passed extremely favourable to early marriages. This was repealed in the year IX..

allowed, it does not clearly follow that the population was incorrectly estimated before the revolution, and that it has been diminished rather than increased since 1792? To this question I should distinctly answer, that it does not follow. It has been seen, in many of the preceding chapters, that the proportions of births, deaths, and marriages, are extremely different in different countries, and there is the strongest reason for believing that they are very different in the same country at different periods, and under different circumstances.

That changes of this kind have taken place in Switzerland has appeared to be almost certain. A similar effect from increased healthiness in our own country may be considered as an established fact. And if we give any credit to the best authorities that can be collected on the subject, it can scarcely be doubted that the rate of morta-

IX., and a law substituted which threw great obstacles in the way of marriage, according to Peuchet (p. 234). These two laws will assist in accounting for a small proportion of births and marriages in the ten years previous to 1813, consistently with the possibility of a large proportion in the first six or seven years after the commencement of the revolution.

lity

lity has diminished, during the last one or two hundred years, in almost every country in Europe. There is nothing therefore that ought to surprise us in the mere fact of the same population being kept up, or even a decided increase taking place, under a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages. And the only question is, whether the actual circumstances of France seem to render such a change probable.

Now it is generally agreed that the condition of the lower classes of people in France before the revolution was very wretched. The wages of labour were about 20 sous, or ten pence a day, at a time when the wages of labour in England were nearly seventeen pence, and the price of wheat of the same quality in the two countries was not very different. Accordingly Arthur Young represents the labouring classes of France, just at the commencement of the revolution, as “76 per cent. worse fed, worse clothed, and worse supported, both in sickness and health, than the same classes in England.”^a And though this statement is perhaps rather too strong, and sufficient

^a Young’s Travels in France, vol. i. p. 437.

allowance

allowance is not made for the real difference of prices, yet his work every where abounds with observations which shew the depressed condition of the labouring classes in France at that time, and imply the pressure of the population very hard against the limits of subsistence.

On the other hand, it is universally allowed that the condition of the French peasantry has been decidedly improved by the revolution and the division of the national domains. All the writers who advert to the subject notice a considerable rise in the price of labour, partly occasioned by the extension of cultivation, and partly by the demands of the army. In the *Statistique Élémentaire* of Peuchet, common labour is stated to have risen from 20 to 30 sous^a, while the price of provisions appears to have remained nearly the same; and Mr. Birbeck, in his late Agricultural Tour in France^b, says that the price of labour without board is twenty pence a day, and that provisions of all kinds are full as cheap again as in England. This would give the French

^a P. 391.

^b P. 13.

labourer

labourer the same command of subsistence as an English labourer would have with three shillings and four pence a day. But at no time were the wages of common day-labour in England so high as three shillings and four pence.

Allowing for some errors in these statements, they are evidently sufficient to establish a very marked improvement in the condition of the lower classes of people in France. But it is next to a physical impossibility that such a relief from the pressure of distress should take place without a diminution in the rate of mortality; and if this diminution in the rate of mortality has not been accompanied by a rapid increase of population, it must necessarily have been accompanied by a smaller proportion of births. In the interval between 1802 and 1813 the population seems to have increased, but to have increased slowly. Consequently a smaller proportion of births, deaths, and marriages, or the more general operation of prudential restraint, is exactly what the circumstances would have led us to expect. There is perhaps no proposition more

more incontrovertible than this, that, in two countries, in which the rate of increase, the natural healthiness of climate, and the state of towns and manufactures are supposed to be nearly the same, the one in which the pressure of poverty is the greatest will have the greatest proportion of births, deaths, and marriages.

It does not then by any means follow, as has been supposed, that because since 1802 the proportion of births in France has been as 1 in 30, Necker ought to have used 30 as his multiplier instead of $25\frac{3}{4}$. If the representations given of the state of the labouring classes in France before and since the revolution be in any degree near the truth, as the march of the population in both periods seems to have been nearly the same, the present proportion of births could not have been applicable at the period when Necker wrote. At the same time it is by no means improbable that he took too low a multiplier. It is hardly credible under all circumstances that the population of France should have increased in the interval between 1785 and 1802 so much as from $25\frac{1}{2}$ millions

to

to 28. But if we allow that the multiplier might at that time have been 27 instead of $25\frac{3}{4}$, it will be allowing as much as is in any degree probable, and yet this will imply an increase of nearly two millions from 1785 to 1813; an increase far short of the rate that has taken place in England, but still sufficient amply to shew the force of the principle of population in overcoming obstacles apparently the most powerful.

With regard to the question of the increase of births in the six or seven first years after the commencement of the revolution, there is no probability of its ever being determined. In the confusion of the times, it is scarcely possible to suppose that the registers should have been regularly kept; and as they were not collected in the year IX., there is no chance of their being brought forward in a correct state at a subsequent period.

BOOK II. CHAP. IX.

[To follow Page 481, Vol. I. Edition 1807.]

Of the Checks to Population in England (continued).

THE returns of the Population Act in 1811 undoubtedly presented extraordinary results. They shewed a greatly accelerated rate of progress, and a greatly improved healthiness of the people, notwithstanding the increase of the towns and the increased proportion of the population engaged in manufacturing employments. They thus furnished another striking instance of the readiness with which population starts forwards, under almost any weight, when the resources of a country are rapidly increasing.

The amount of the population in 1800, together with the proportions of births, deaths and marriages, given in the registers, made it appear that the population had been for some time increasing at a rate rather exceeding what would result from a proportion

proportion of births to deaths as 4 to 3, with a mortality of 1 in 40.

These proportions would add to the population of a country every year $\frac{1}{120}$ th part; and if they were to continue, would according to table ii., page 168, double the population in every successive period of $83\frac{1}{2}$ years. This is a rate of progress which in a rich and well-peopled country might reasonably be expected to diminish rather than to increase. But instead of any such diminution, it appears that as far as 1810 it had been considerably accelerated.

In 1810, according to the returns from each parish, with the addition of $\frac{1}{30}$ for the soldiers, sailors, &c., the population of England and Wales was estimated at 10,488,000^a, which compared with 9,168,000, the population of 1800 estimated in a similar manner, shews an increase in the ten years of 1,320,000.

The registered baptisms during ten years were 2,878,906, and the registered burials 1,950,189. The excess of the births is

^a See the Population Abstracts published in 1811, and the valuable Preliminary Observations by Mr. Rickman.

therefore

therefore 928,717, which falls very considerably short of the increase shewn by the two enumerations. This deficiency could only be occasioned either by the enumeration in 1800 being below the truth, or by the inaccuracy of the registers of births and burials, or by the operation of these two causes combined ; as it is obvious that, if the population in 1800 were estimated correctly, and the registers contained all the births and burials, the difference must exceed rather than fall short of the real addition to the population ; that is, it would exceed it exactly by the number of persons dying abroad in the army, navy, &c.

There is reason to believe that both causes had a share in producing the effect observed, though the latter, that is, the inaccuracy of the registers, in much the greatest degree.

In estimating the population throughout the century ^a, the births have been assumed to bear the same proportion at all times to

^a See a table of the population throughout the century, in page xxv. of the Preliminary Observations to the Population Abstracts, printed in 1811.

the number of people. It has been seen that such an assumption might often lead to a very incorrect estimate of the population of a country at different and distant periods. As the population however is known to have increased with great rapidity from 1800 to 1810, it is probable that the proportion of births did not essentially diminish during that period. But if, taking the last enumeration as correct, we compare the births of 1810 with the births of 1800, the result will imply a larger population in 1800 than is given in the enumeration for that year.

Thus the average of the last five years' births to 1810 is 297,000, and the average of the five years' births to 1800 is 263,000. But 297,000 is to 263,000 as 10,488,000, the population of 1810, to 9,287,000, which must therefore have been the population in 1800 if the proportion of births be assumed to be the same, instead of 9,168,000, the result of the enumeration. It is further to be observed that the increase of population from 1795 to 1800 is according to the table unusually small, compared with most of the preceding periods of five years. And a slight

slight inspection of the registers will shew that the proportion of births for five years from 1795, including the diminished numbers of 1796 and 1800, was more likely to be below than above the general average. For these reasons, together with the general impression on the subject, it is probable that the enumeration in 1800 was short of the truth, and perhaps the population at that time may be safely taken at as much as 9,287,000 at the least, or about 119,000 greater than the returns gave it.

But even upon this supposition, neither the excess of births above the deaths in the whole of the ten years, nor the proportion of births to deaths, as given in the registers, will account for an increase from 9,287,000 to 10,488,000. Yet it is not probable that the increase has been much less than is shewn by the proportion of the births at the two periods. Some allowance must therefore necessarily be made for omissions in the registers of births and deaths, which are known to be very far from correct, particularly the registers of births.

There is reason to believe that there are few

few or no omissions in the register of marriages; and if we suppose the omissions in the births to be one-6th, this will preserve a proportion of the births to the marriages as 4 to 1, a proportion which appears to be satisfactorily established upon other grounds^a; but if we are warranted in this supposition, it will be fair to take the omissions in the deaths at such a number as will make the excess of the births above the deaths in the ten years accord with the increase of population estimated by the increase of the births.

The registered births in the ten years, as was mentioned before, are 2,878,906, which increased by one-6th will be 3,358,723. The registered burials are 1,950,189, which increased by one-12th will be 2,112,704. The latter subtracted from the former will give 1,246,019 for the excess of births, and the increase of population in the ten years, which number added to 9,287,000, the corrected population of 1800, will give 10,533,019, forty-five thousand above the enumeration of 1810, leaving almost exactly

^a See the Preliminary Observations on the Population Abstracts, p. xxvi.

the number which in the course of the ten years appears to have died abroad. This number has been calculated generally at about $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on the male births; but in the present case there are the means of ascertaining more accurately the number of males dying abroad during the period in question. In the last population returns the male and female births and deaths are separated; and from the excess of the male births above the female births, compared with the male and female deaths, it appears that forty-five thousand males died abroad^a.

The assumed omissions therefore in the births and burials seem to answer so far very well.

It remains to see whether the same suppositions will give such a proportion of births to deaths, with such a rate of mortality, as will also account for an increase of numbers in ten years from 9,287,000 to 10,488,000.

If we divide the population of 1810 by

^a See Population Abstracts, 1811, page 196 of the Parish Register Abstract.

It is certainly very extraordinary that a smaller proportion of males than usual should appear to have died abroad from 1800 to 1810; but as the registers for this period seem to prove it, I have made my calculations accordingly.

the

the average births of the preceding five years, with the addition of one-6th, it will appear that the proportion of births to the population is as 1 to 30. But it is obvious that if the population be increasing with some rapidity, the average of births for five years, compared with the population at the end of such period, must give the proportion of births too small. And further there is always a probability that a proportion which is correct for five years may not be correct for ten years. In order to obtain the true proportion applicable to the progress of population during the period in question, we must compare the annual average of the births for the whole term, with the average or mean population of the whole term.

The whole number of births, with the addition of $\frac{1}{6}$, is, as before stated, 3,358,723, and the annual average during the ten years 335,872. The mean population, or the mean between 10,488,000 (the population of 1810) and 9,287,000 (the corrected population of 1800) is 9,887,000; and the latter number divided by the average of

the births will give a proportion of births to the population as 1 to rather less than $29\frac{1}{2}$, instead of 30, which will make a considerable difference.

In the same manner, if we divide the population of 1810 by the average of the burials for the preceding five years, with the addition of one-12th, the mortality will appear to be as 1 in nearly 50 ; but upon the same grounds as with regard to the births, an average of the burials for five years, compared with the population at the end of such term, must give the proportion of burials too small ; and further it is known, in the present case, that the proportion of burials to the population by no means continued the same during the whole time. In fact the registers clearly shew an improvement in the healthiness of the country, and a diminution of mortality progressively through the ten years ; and while the average number of annual births increased from 263,000 to 297,000, or more than one-8th, the burials increased only from 192,000 to 196,000, or one-48th. It is obviously necessary

cessary then for the purpose in view to compare the average mortality with the average or mean population.

The whole number of burials in the ten years, with the addition of one-12th, is, as was before stated, 2,112,704, and the mean population 9,887,000. The latter, divided by the former, gives the annual average of burials compared with the population as 1 to rather less than 47. But a proportion of births as 1 to $29\frac{1}{2}$, with a proportion of deaths as 1 to 47, will add yearly to the numbers of a country one-79th of the whole, and in ten years will increase the population from 9,287,000 to 10,531,000, leaving 43,000 for the deaths abroad, and agreeing very nearly with the calculation founded on the excess of births ^a.

We

^a A general formula for estimating the population of a country at any distance from a certain period, under given circumstances of births and mortality, may be found in Bridge's Elements of Algebra, p. 225.

$$\text{Log. } A = \log. P + n \times \log. \frac{1 + m - b}{m - b}$$

A representing the required population at the end of any number of years; n the number of years; P the actual population

We may presume therefore that the assumed omissions in the births and deaths from 1800 to 1810 are not far from the truth.

But if these omissions of one-6th for the births and one-12th for the burials, may be considered as nearly right for the period between 1800 and 1810, it is probable that they may be applied without much danger of error to the period between 1780 and 1800, and may serve to correct some of the conclusions founded on the births alone. Next to an accurate enumeration, a calculation from the excess of births above the deaths is the most to be depended upon. Indeed population at the given period; $\frac{1}{m}$ the proportion of yearly deaths to the population, or ratio of mortality; $\frac{1}{b}$ the proportion of yearly births to the population, or ratio of births.

In the present case, $P = 9,287,000$; $n = 10$; $m = 47$; $b = 29\frac{1}{2}$.

$$\frac{m-b}{mb} = \frac{1}{79} \text{ and } 1 + \frac{m-b}{mb} = \frac{80}{79}$$

The log. of $\frac{80}{79} = 00546$; $\therefore n \times \log. 1 + \frac{m-b}{mb} = 05460$. Log. $P = 6.96787$, which added to 05460 = 7.02247 the log. of A, the number answering to which is 10.531,000.

when

when the registers contain all the births and deaths, and these are the means of setting out from a known population, it is obviously the same as an actual enumeration ; and where a nearly correct allowance can be made for the omissions in the registers, and for the deaths abroad, a much nearer approximation to it may be obtained in this way than from the proportion of births to the whole population, which is known to be liable to such frequent variations.

The whole number of births returned in the twenty years, from 1780 to 1800, is 5,014,899, and of the burials 3,840,455. If we add one-6th to the former, and one-12th to the latter, the two numbers will be 5,850,715; and 4,160,492, and subtracting the latter from the former, the excess of the births above the deaths will be 1,690,223. Adding this excess to the population of 1780, as calculated in Mr. Rickman's tables, from the births, which is 7,953,000, the result will be 9,643,000, a number which, after making a proper allowance for the deaths abroad, is very much above the population of 1800, as before corrected, and still more above the number

number which is given in the table as the result of the enumeration.

But if we proceed upon the safer ground just suggested, and, taking the corrected population of 1800 as established, subtract from it the excess of the births during the twenty years, diminished by the probable number of deaths abroad, which in this case will be about 124,000, we shall have the number 7,721,000 for the population of 1780, instead of 7,953,000; and there is good reason to believe that this is nearer the truth^a; and that not only in 1780, but in many of the intermediate periods, the estimate from the births has represented the population as greater, and increasing more irregularly, than would be found to be true, if recourse could be had to enumerations. This has arisen from the proportion of births to the population being variable, and, on the whole, greater in 1780, and at other periods during the course of the twenty years, than it was in 1800,

In 1795, for instance, the population is

^a The very small difference between the population of 1780 and 1785, as given in the table, seems strongly to imply that one of the two estimates is erroneous.

represented

represented to be 9,055,000, and in 1800 9,168,000^a; but if we suppose the first number to be correct, and add the excess of the births above the deaths in the five intervening years, even without making any allowance for omissions in the registers, we shall find that the population in 1800 ought to have been 9,398,000 instead of 9,168,000; or if we take the number returned for 1800 as correct, it will appear by subtracting from it the excess of births during the five preceding years, that the population in 1795 ought to have been 8,825,000, instead of 9,055,000. Hence it follows, that the estimate from the births in 1795 cannot be correct.

To obtain the population at that period, the safest way is to apply the before-mentioned corrections to the registers, and, having made the allowance of $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on the male births for the deaths abroad, subtract the remaining excess of the births from the corrected returns of 1800. The result in

^a Population Abstracts, 1811. Preliminary View,
p. xxv.

this case will be 8,831,086 for the population of 1795, implying an increase in the five years of 455,914, instead of only 113,000, as shewn by the table calculated from the births.

If we proceed in the same manner with the period from 1790 to 1795, we shall find that the excess of births above the deaths (after the foregoing corrections have been applied, and an allowance has been made of $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. upon the male births for the deaths abroad), will be 415,669, which, subtracted from 8,831,086, the population of 1795, as above estimated, leaves 8,415,417 for the population of 1790.

Upon the same principle, the excess of the births above the deaths in the interval between 1785 and 1790 will turn out to be 416,776. The population in 1785 will therefore be 7,998,641. And in like manner the excess of the births above the deaths in the interval between 1780 and 1785 will be 277,544, and the population in 1780 7,721,097.

The

The two tables therefore, of the population, from 1780 to 1810, will stand thus:—

Table, calculated from the births alone, in the Preliminary Observations to the Population Abstracts printed in 1811.

Population in	
1780	7,953,000
1785	8,016,000
1790	8,675,000
1795	9,055,000
1800	9,168,000
1805	9,828,000
1810	10,488,000

Table, calculated from the excess of the births above the deaths, after an allowance made for the omissions in the registers, and the deaths abroad.

Population in	
1780	7,721,000
1785	7,998,000
1790	8,415,000
1795	8,831,000
1800	9,287,000
1805	9,837,000
1810	10,488,000

In the first table, or table calculated from the births alone, the additions made to the population in each period of five years are as follow:—

From 1780 to 1785	63,000
From 1785 to 1790	659,000
From 1790 to 1795	380,000
From 1795 to 1800	113,000
From 1800 to 1805	660,000
From 1805 to 1810	660,000

In

In the second table, or table calculated from the excess of the births above the deaths, after the proposed corrections have been applied, the additions made to the population in each period of five years will stand thus:—

From 1780 to 1785	277,000
From 1785 to 1790	417,000
From 1790 to 1795	416,000
From 1795 to 1800	456,000
From 1800 to 1805	550,000
From 1805 to 1810	651,000

The progress of the population, according to this latter table, appears much more natural and probable than according to the former.

It is in no respect likely that, in the interval between 1780 and 1785, the increase of the population should only have been 63,000, and in the next period 659,000; or that, in the interval between 1795 and 1800, it should have been only 113,000, and in the next period 660,000. But it is not necessary to dwell on probabilities; the most distinct proofs may be brought to

to shew that, whether the new table be right or not, the old table must be wrong. Without any allowances being made for omissions in the registers, the excess of the births above the deaths, in the period from 1780 to 1785, shews an increase of 193,000, instead of 63,000. And, on the other hand, no allowances for omissions in the registers, that could with the slightest degree of probability be supposed, would make the excess of births above the deaths in the period from 1785 to 1790 equal to 659,000. Making no allowance for omissions, this excess only amounts to 317,406 ; and if we were to suppose the omissions in the births one 4th, instead of one 6th, and that there were no omissions in the registers of burials, and that no one died abroad, the excess would still fall short of the number stated by many thousands.

The same results would follow, if we were to estimate the progress of population during these periods by the proportion of births to deaths, and the rate of mortality. In the first period the increase would turn out to be very much greater than

than the increase stated, and in the other very much less.

Similar observations may be made with regard to some of the other periods in the old table, particularly that between 1795 and 1800, which has been already noticed.

It will be found on the other hand that, if the proportion of births to deaths during each period be estimated with tolerable accuracy and compared with the mean population, the rate of the progress of the population determined by this criterion will, in every period, agree very nearly with the rate of progress determined by the excess of the births above the deaths, after applying the proposed corrections. And it is further worthy of remark that, if the corrections proposed should be in some degree inaccurate, as is probable, the errors arising from any such inaccuracies are likely to be very much less considerable than those which must necessarily arise from the assumption on which the old table is founded; namely, that the births bear at all times the same proportion to the population.

Of

Of course I do not mean to reject any estimates of population formed in this way, when no better materials are to be found ; but, in the present case, the registers of the burials as well as baptisms are given every year, as far back as 1780, and these registers, with the firm ground of the last enumeration to stand upon, afford the means of giving a more correct table of the population from 1780 than was before furnished, and of shewing at the same time the uncertainty of estimates from the births alone, particularly with a view to the progress of population during particular periods. In estimating the whole population of a large country, two or three hundred thousand are not of much importance; but, in estimating the rate of increase during a period of five or ten years, an error to this amount is quite fatal. It will be allowed, I conceive, to make an essential difference in our conclusions respecting the rate of increase for any five years which we may fix upon, whether the addition made to the population during the term in question is 63,000

or

or 277,000, 115,000 or 456,000, 659,000 or 417,000.

With regard to the period of the century previous to 1780, as the registers of the baptisms and burials are not returned for every year, it is not possible to apply the same corrections. And it will be obvious that, in the table calculated from the births previous to this period, when the registers are only given for insulated years at some distance from each other, very considerable errors may arise, not merely from the varying proportion of the births to the population, on averages of five years, but from the individual years produced not representing with tolerable correctness these averages^a. A very slight glance at the valuable table of baptisms, burials and marriages, given in the Preliminary Observations, to the Population Abstracts^b, will shew

* From the one or the other of these causes, I have little doubt, that the numbers in the table for 1760 and 1770, which imply so rapid an increase of population in that interval, do not bear the proper relation to each other. It is probable that the number given for 1770 is too great.

^b P. 20.

how

how very little dependence ought to be placed upon inferences respecting the population drawn from the number of births, deaths or marriages in individual years. If, for instance, we were estimating the population in the two years 1800 and 1801, compared with the two following years 1802 and 1803, from the proportion of marriages to the population, assuming this proportion to be always the same, it would appear that, if the population in the first two years were nine millions, in the second two years immediately succeeding it would be considerably above twelve millions, and thus it would seem to have increased above three millions, or more than one-third, in this short interval. Nor would the result of an estimate, formed from the births for the two years 1800 and 1801, compared with the two years 1803 and 1804, be materially different; at least such an estimate would indicate an increase of two millions six hundred thousand in three years.

The reader can hardly be surprised at these results, if he recollects that the births, deaths and marriages bear but a small

proportion to the whole population ; and that consequently variations in either of these, which may take place from temporary causes, cannot possibly be accompanied by similar variations in the whole mass of the population. An increase in the births of one-third, which might occur in a single year, instead of increasing the population one-third, would only perhaps increase it one-eightieth or ninetieth.

It follows therefore, as I stated in the last chapter, that the table of the population for the century previous to 1780, calculated from the returns of the births alone, at the distance of ten years each, can only be considered as a very rough approximation towards the truth, in the absence of better materials, and can scarcely in any degree be depended upon for the comparative rate of increase at particular periods.

The population in 1810, compared with that of 1800, corrected as proposed in this chapter, implies a less rapid increase than the difference between the two enumerations ; and it has further appeared that the assumed proportion of births to deaths as

47 to 29½ is rather below than above the truth. Yet this proportion is quite extraordinary for a rich and well-peopled territory. It would add to the population of a country one 79th every year, and, were it to continue, would, according to table ii. p. 168 in this volume, double the number of inhabitants in less than fifty-five years.

This is a rate of increase, which in the nature of things cannot be permanent. It has been occasioned by the stimulus of a greatly-increased demand for labour, combined with a greatly-increased power of production, both in agriculture and manufactures. These are the two elements necessary to form an effective encouragement to a rapid increase of population. A failure of either of these must immediately weaken the stimulus; and there is but too much reason to fear the failure of one of them at present. But what has already taken place is a striking illustration of the principle of population, and a proof that in spite of great towns, manufacturing occupations, and the gradually-acquired habits of an opulent and luxuriant people, if the re-

sources of a country will admit of a rapid increase, and if these resources are so advantageously distributed as to occasion a constantly-increasing demand for labour, the population will not fail to keep pace with them.

BOOK III. CHAP. III.

[To follow Page 45, Vol. II. Edition 1807.]

Of Systems of Equality (continued).

IT was suggested to me some years since by persons for whose judgment I have a high respect, that it might be advisable, in a new edition, to throw out the matter relative to systems of equality, to Wallace, Condorcet and Godwin, as having in a considerable degree lost its interest, and as not being strictly connected with the main subject of the Essay, which is an explanation and illustration of the theory of population. But independently of its being natural for me to have some little partiality for that part of the work which led to those inquiries on which the main subject rests; I really think that there should be somewhere on record an answer to systems of equality founded on the principle of population ; and perhaps such an answer is as appropriately placed, and is likely to have as much effect, among the illustrations and applications

tions of the principle of population, as in any other situation to which it could be assigned.

The appearances in all human societies, particularly in all those which are the furthest advanced in civilization and improvement, will ever be such, as to inspire superficial observers with a belief that a prodigious change for the better might be effected by the introduction of a system of equality and of common property. They see abundance in some quarters, and want in others; and the natural and obvious remedy seems to be an equal division of the produce. They see a prodigious quantity of human exertion wasted upon trivial, useless, and sometimes pernicious objects, which might either be wholly saved or more effectively employed. They see invention after invention in machinery brought forward, which is seemingly calculated, in the most marked manner, to abate the sum of human toil. Yet with these apparent means of giving plenty, leisure and happiness to all, they still see the labours of the great mass of society undiminished, and their condition, if not

not deteriorated, in no very striking and palpable manner improved.

Under these circumstances, it cannot be a matter of wonder that proposals for systems of equality should be continually reviving. After periods when the subject has undergone a thorough discussion, or when some great experiment in improvement has failed, it is likely that the question should lie dormant for a time, and that the opinions of the advocates of equality should be ranked among those errors which had passed away to be heard of no more. But it is probable that if the world were to last for any number of thousand years, systems of equality would be among those errors, which like the tunes of a barrel organ, to use the illustration of Dugald Stewart^a, will never cease to return at certain intervals.

I am induced to make these remarks, and to add a little to what I have already said on systems of equality, instead of leaving out the whole discussion, by a tendency to a revival of this kind at the present moment.

^a Preliminary Dissertation to Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, p. 121.

A gentleman, for whom I have a very sincere respect, Mr. Owen, of Lanark, has lately published a work entitled *A New View of Society*, which is intended to prepare the public mind for the introduction of a system involving a community of labour and of goods. It is also generally known that an idea has lately prevailed among some of the lower classes of society, that the land is the people's farm, the rent of which ought to be equally divided among them; and that they have been deprived of the benefits which belong to them from this their natural inheritance, by the injustice and oppression of their stewards, the landlords.

Mr. Owen is, I believe, a man of real benevolence, who has done much good; and every friend to humanity must heartily wish him success in his endeavours to procure an Act of Parliament for limiting the hours of working among the children in the cotton manufactories, and preventing them from being employed at too early an age. He is further entitled to great attention on all subjects relating to education, from the experience and knowledge which he must have

have gained in an intercourse of many years with two thousand manufacturers, and from the success which is said to have resulted from his modes of management. A theory professed to be founded on such experience is no doubt worthy of much more consideration than one formed in a closet.

The claims to attention possessed by the author of the new doctrines relating to land are certainly very slender; and the doctrines themselves indicate a very great degree of ignorance; but the errors of the labouring classes of society are always entitled to great indulgence and consideration. They are the natural and pardonable results of their liability to be deceived by first appearances, and by the arts of designing men, owing to the nature of their situation, and the scanty knowledge which in general falls to their share. And, except in extreme cases, it must always be the wish of those who are better informed, that they should be brought to a sense of the truth, rather by patience and the gradual diffusion of education and knowledge, than by any harsher methods.

After

After what I have already said on systems of equality in the preceding chapters, I shall not think it necessary to enter into a long and elaborate refutation of these doctrines. I merely mean to give an additional reason for leaving on record an answer to systems of equality, founded on the principle of population, together with a concise restatement of this answer for practical application.

Of the two decisive arguments against such systems, one is, the unsuitableness of a state of equality, both according to experience and theory, to the production of those stimulants to exertion which can alone overcome the natural indolence of man, and prompt him to the proper cultivation of the earth and the fabrication of those conveniences and comforts which are necessary to his happiness.

And the other, the inevitable and necessary poverty and misery in which every system of equality must shortly terminate from the acknowledged tendency of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence, unless such increase be prevented

vented by means infinitely more cruel than those which result from the laws of private property, and the moral obligation imposed on every man by the commands of God and nature to support his own children.

The first of these arguments has, I confess, always appeared to my own mind sufficiently conclusive. A state, in which an inequality of conditions offers the natural rewards of good conduct, and inspires widely and generally the hopes of rising and the fears of falling in society, is unquestionably the best calculated to develope the energies and faculties of man, and the best suited to the exercise and improvement of human virtue^a. And history, in every case of equality that has yet occurred, has uniformly borne witness to the depressing and deadening effects which arise from the want of this stimulus. But still perhaps it may be true that neither experience nor theory on this subject is quite so decisive as to preclude all plausible ar-

^a See this subject very ably treated in a work on the Records of the Creation, and the Moral Attributes of the Creator, by the Rev. John Bird Sumner, not long since published; a work of very great merit, which I hope soon to see in as extensive circulation as it deserves.

guments on the other side. It may be said that the instances which history records of systems of equality really carried into execution are so few, and those in societies so little advanced from a state of barbarism, as to afford no fair conclusions relative to periods of great civilization and improvement; that in other instances in ancient times, where approaches were made toward a tolerable equality of conditions, examples of considerable energy of character in some lines of exertion are not unfrequent; and that in modern times some societies, particularly of Moravians, are known to have had much of their property in common without occasioning the destruction of their industry. It may be said that, allowing the stimulus of inequality of conditions to have been necessary, in order to raise man from the indolence and apathy of the savage to the activity and intelligence of civilized life, it does not follow that the continuance of the same stimulus should be necessary when this activity and energy of mind has been once gained. It may *then* be allowable quietly to enjoy the benefit of a regimen

gimen which, like many other stimulants, having produced its proper effect at a certain point must be left off, or exhaustion, disease and death will follow.

These observations are certainly not of a nature to produce conviction in those who have studied the human character ; but they are to a certain degree plausible, and do not admit of so definite and decisive an answer as to make the proposal for an experiment in modern times utterly absurd and unreasonable.

The peculiar advantage of the other argument against systems of equality, that which is founded on the principle of population, is, that it is not only still more generally and uniformly confirmed by experience, in every age and in every part of the world, but it is so pre-eminently clear in theory, that no tolerably plausible answer can be given to it ; and consequently no decent pretence can be brought forward for an experiment. The affair is a matter of the most simple calculation applied to the known properties of land, and the proportion of births to deaths which takes place in

in almost every country village. There are many parishes in England, where, notwithstanding the actual difficulties attending the support of a family which must *necessarily* occur in every well-peopled country, and making no allowances for omissions in the registers, the births are to the deaths in the proportion of 2 to 1. This proportion, with the usual rate of mortality in country places, of about 1 in 50, would continue doubling the population in 41 years, if there were no emigrations from the parish. But in any system of equality, either such as that proposed by Mr. Owen, or in parochial partnerships in land, not only would there be no means of emigration to other parishes with any prospect of relief, but the rate of increase at first would of course be much greater than in the present state of society. What then, I would ask, is to prevent the division of the produce of the soil to each individual from becoming every year less and less, till the whole society and every individual member of it are pressed down by want and misery ^a? This

* In the Spencean system, as published by the secretary
of

This is a very simple and intelligible question. And surely no man ought to propose or support a system of equality, who is not able to give a rational answer to it, at least in theory. But even in theory, I have never yet heard any thing approaching to a rational answer to it.

It is a very superficial observation which has sometimes been made, that it is a contradiction to lay great stress upon the efficacy of moral restraint in an improved and improving state of society, according

of the Society of Spencean Philanthropists, it unfortunately happens, that after the *proposed* allowances have been made for the expenses of the government, and of the other bodies in the state which are intended to be supported, there would be absolutely no remainder; and the people would not derive a single sixpence from their estate, even at first, and on the supposition of the national debt being entirely abolished, without the slightest compensation to the national creditors.

The annual rent of the land, houses, mines and fisheries, is estimated at 150 millions, about three times its real amount; yet, even upon this extravagant estimate, it is calculated that the division would only come to about four pounds a head, not more than is sometimes given to individuals from the poor's rates; a miserable provision and yet constantly diminishing.

to

to the present structure of it, and yet to suppose that it would not act with sufficient force in a system of equality, which almost always presupposes a great diffusion of information, and a great improvement of the human mind. Those who have made this observation do not see that the encouragement and motive to moral restraint are at once destroyed in a system of equality, and community of goods.

Let us suppose that in a system of equality, in spite of the best exertions to procure more food, the population is pressing hard against the limits of subsistence, and all are becoming very poor. It is evidently necessary under these circumstances, in order to prevent the society from starving, that the rate at which the population increases, should be retarded. But who are the persons that are to exercise the restraint thus called for, and either to marry late or not at all? It does not seem to be a necessary consequence of a system of equality that all the human passions should be at once extinguished by it; but if not, those who might wish to marry would feel it hard that they should be among the

the number forced to restrain their inclinations. As all would be equal, and in similar circumstances, there would be no reason whatever why one individual should think himself obliged to practise the duty of restraint more than another. The thing however must be done, with any hope of avoiding universal misery ; and in a state of equality, the necessary restraint could only be effected by some general law. But how is this law to be supported, and how are the violations of it to be punished ? Is the man who marries early to be pointed at with the finger of scorn ? is he to be whipped at the cart's tail ? is he to be confined for years in a prison ? is he to have his children exposed ? Are not all direct punishments for an offence of this kind shocking and unnatural to the last degree ? And yet, if it be absolutely necessary, in order to prevent the most overwhelming wretchedness, that there should be some restraint on the tendency to early marriages, when the resources of the country are only sufficient to support a slow rate of increase, can the most fertile imagination conceive

one at once so natural, so just, so consonant to the laws of God and to the best laws framed by the most enlightened men, as that each individual should be responsible for the maintenance of his own children ; that is, that he should be subjected to the natural inconveniences and difficulties arising from the indulgence of his inclinations, and to no other whatever ?

That this natural check to early marriages arising from a view of the difficulty attending the support of a large family operates very widely throughout all classes of society in every civilized state, and may be expected to be still more effective, as the lower classes of people continue to improve in knowledge and prudence, cannot admit of the slightest doubt. But the operation of this natural check depends exclusively upon the existence of the laws of property, and succession ; and in a state of equality and community of property could only be replaced by some artificial regulation of a very different stamp, and a much more unnatural character. Of this Mr. Owen is fully sensible, and has in consequence taxed

taxed his ingenuity to the utmost to invent some mode, by which the difficulties arising from the progress of population could be got rid of, in the state of society to which he looks forward. His absolute inability to suggest any mode of accomplishing this object that is not unnatural, immoral, or cruel in a high degree, together with the same want of success in every other person, ancient^a or modern, who has made a similar attempt, seem to shew that the argument against systems of equality founded on the principle of population does not admit of a plausible answer, even in theory. The fact of the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence may be seen in almost every register of a country parish in the kingdom. The unavoidable effect of this tendency to depress the whole body of the people in want and misery, unless the progress of the population be somehow or other retarded, is equally obvious; and the impossibility of checking

* The reader has already seen in ch. xiii. bk. i. the detestable means of checking population proposed by some ancient lawgivers in order to support their systems of equality.

the rate of increase in a state of equality, without resorting to regulations that are unnatural, immoral or cruel, forms an argument at once conclusive against every such system.

BOOK III.

CONTINUATION OF CHAP. IV.

[To follow Page 72, Vol. II. Edition 1807.]

In all countries the progress of wealth must depend mainly upon the industry, skill and success of individuals, and upon the state and demands of other countries. Consequently, in all countries, great variations may take place at different times in the rate at which wealth increases, and in the demand for labour. But though the progress of population is mainly regulated by the effective demand for labour, it is obvious that the number of people cannot conform itself immediately to the state of this demand. Some time is required to bring more labour into the market when it is wanted; and some time to check the supply when it is flowing in with too great rapidity. If these variations amount to no more than that natural sort of oscillation noticed in an early part of this work, which seems almost always to accompany the pro-

gress

gress of population and food, they should be submitted to as a part of the usual course of things. But circumstances may occasionally give them great force, and then, during the period that the supply of labour is increasing faster than the demand, the labouring classes are subject to the most severe distress. If, for instance, from a combination of external and internal causes, a very great stimulus should be given to the population of a country for ten or twelve years together, and it should then comparatively cease, it is clear that labour will continue flowing into the market, with almost undiminished rapidity, while the means of employing and paying it have been essentially contracted. It is precisely under these circumstances that emigration is most useful as a temporary relief; and it is in these circumstances that Great Britain finds herself placed at present^a. Though no emigration should take place, the population will by degrees conform itself to the state of the demand for labour; but the interval must be marked by the most severe distress,

* 1816 and 1817.

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the amount of which can scarcely be reduced by any human efforts ; because, though it may be mitigated at particular periods, and as it affects particular classes, it will be proportionably extended over a larger space of time and a greater number of people. The only real relief in such a case is emigration ; and the subject at the present moment is well worthy the attention of the government, both as a matter of humanity and policy.

BOOK III. CHAP. VII.

[To follow Page 112, Vol. II. Edition 1807.]

Of Poor-Laws, continued.

THE remarks made in the last chapter on the nature and effects of the poor-laws have been in the most striking manner confirmed by the experience of the years 1815, 1816 and 1817. During these years, two points of the very highest importance have been established, so as no longer to admit of a doubt in the mind of any rational man.

The first is, that the country does not in point of fact fulfil the promise which it makes to the poor in the poor-laws, to maintain and find in employment, by means of parish assessments, those who are unable to support themselves or their families, either from want of work or any other cause.

And secondly, that with a very great increase of legal parish assessments, aided by the most liberal and praiseworthy contributions

butions of voluntary charity, the country has been wholly unable to find adequate employment for the numerous labourers and artificers who were able as well as willing to work.

It can no longer surely be contended that the poor-laws really perform what they promise, when it is known that many almost starving families have been found in London and other great towns, who are deterred from going on the parish by the crowded, unhealthy and horrible state of the workhouses into which they would be received, if indeed they could be received at all ; when it is known that many parishes have been absolutely unable to raise the necessary assessments, the increase of which, according to the existing laws, have tended only to bring more and more persons upon the parish, and to make what was collected less and less effectual ; and when it is known that there has been an almost universal cry from one end of the kingdom to the other for voluntary charity to come in aid of the parochial assessments.

These strong indications of the inefficiency

ciency of the poor-laws, may merely be considered, not only as incontrovertible proofs of the fact that they do not perform what they promise, but as affording the strongest presumption that they cannot do it. The best of all reasons for the breach of a promise, is, the absolute impossibility of executing it; indeed it is the only plea that can ever be considered as valid. But though it may be fairly pardonable not to execute an impossibility, it is unpardonable knowingly to promise one. And if it be still thought advisable to act upon these statutes as far as is practicable, it would surely be wise so to alter the terms in which they are expressed, and the general interpretation given to them, as not to convey to the poor a false notion of what really is within the range of practicability.

It has appeared further as a matter of fact, that very large voluntary contributions, combined with greatly increased parochial assessments, and aided by the most able and incessant exertions of individuals, have failed to give the necessary employment to those who have been thrown out

out of work by the sudden falling off of demand which has occurred during the last two or three years.

It might perhaps have been foreseen that, as the great movements of society, the great causes which render a nation progressive, stationary or declining, for longer or shorter periods, cannot be supposed to depend much upon parochial assessments or the contributions of charity, it could not be expected that any efforts of this kind should have power to create in a stationary or declining state of things that effective demand for labour which only belongs to a progressive state. But to those who did not see this truth before, the melancholy experience of the last two years must have brought it home with an overpowering conviction.

It does not however by any means follow that the exertions which have been made to relieve the present distresses have been ill directed. On the contrary, they have not only been prompted by the most praiseworthy motives; they have not only fulfilled the great moral duty of assisting our fellow-

fellow-creatures in distress ; but they have in point of fact done great good, or at least prevented great evil. Their partial failure does not necessarily indicate either a want of energy or a want of skill in those who have taken the lead in these efforts, but merely that a part only of what has been attempted is practicable.

It is practicable to mitigate the violence and relieve the severe pressure of the present distress, so as to carry the sufferers through to better times, though even this can only be done at the expense of some sacrifices, not merely of the rich, but of other classes of the poor. But it is impracticable by any exertions, either individual or national, to restore at once that brisk demand for commodities and labour which has been lost by events, that, however they may have originated, are now beyond the power of control.

The whole subject is surrounded on all sides by the most formidable difficulties, and in no state of things is it so necessary to recollect the saying of Daniel de Foe quoted in the last chapter. 'The manufac-

turers

turers all over the country, and the Spital-fields weavers in particular, are in a state of the deepest distress, occasioned immediately and directly by the want of demand for the produce of their industry, and the consequent necessity felt by the masters of turning off many of their workmen, in order to proportion the supply to the contracted demand. It is proposed however, by some well-meaning people, to raise by subscription a fund for the express purpose of setting to work again those who have been turned off by their masters, the effect of which can only be to continue glutting a market, already much too fully supplied. This is most naturally and justly objected to by the masters, as it prevents them from withdrawing the supply, and taking the only course which can prevent the total destruction of their capitals, and the necessity of turning off all their men instead of a part.

On the other hand, some classes of merchants and manufacturers clamour very loudly for the prohibition of all foreign commodities which may enter into competition

tition with domestic products, and interfere, as they intimate, with the employment of British industry. But this is most naturally and most justly deprecated by other classes of British subjects, who are employed to a very great extent in preparing and manufacturing those commodities which are to purchase our imports from foreign countries. And it must be allowed to be perfectly true that a court-ball, at which only British stuffs are admitted, may be the means of throwing out of employment in one quarter of the country just as many persons as it furnishes with employment in another.

Still, it would be desirable if possible to employ those that are out of work, if it were merely to avoid the bad moral effects of idleness, and of the evil habits which might be generated by depending for a considerable time on mere alms. But the difficulties just stated will shew, that we ought to proceed in this part of the attempt with great caution, and that the kinds of employment which ought to be chosen are those, the results of which will not

not interfere with existing capitals. Such are public works of all descriptions, the making and repairing of roads, bridges, railways, canals, &c.; and now perhaps, since the great loss of agricultural capital, almost every sort of labour upon the land, which could be carried on by public subscription.

Yet even in this way of employing labour, the benefit to some must bring with it disadvantages to others. That portion of each person's revenue which might go in subscriptions of this kind, must of course be lost to the various sorts of labour which its expenditure in the usual channels would have supported; and the want of demand thus occasioned in these channels must cause the pressure of distress to be felt in quarters which might otherwise have escaped it. But this is an effect which, in such cases, it is impossible to avoid; and, as a temporary measure, it is not only charitable but just, to spread the evil over a larger surface, in order that its violence on particular parts may be so mitigated as to be made bearable by all.

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The great object to be kept in view, is to support the people through their present distresses, in the hope (and I trust a just one) of better times. The difficulty is without doubt considerably aggravated by the prodigious stimulus which has been given to the population of the country of late years, the effects of which cannot suddenly subside. But it will be seen probably, when the next returns of the population are made, that the marriages and births have diminished, and the deaths increased in a still greater degree than in 1800 and 1801; and the continuance of this effect to a certain degree for a few years will retard the progress of the population, and combined with the increasing wants of Europe and America from their increasing riches, and the adaptation of the supply of commodities at home to the new distribution of wealth occasioned by the alteration of the circulating medium, will again give life and energy to all our mercantile and agricultural transactions, and restore the labouring classes to full employment and good wages.

On

On the subject of the distresses of the poor, and particularly the increase of pauperism of late years, the most erroneous opinions have been circulated. During the progress of the war, the increase in the proportion of persons requiring parish assistance was attributed chiefly to the high price of the necessaries of life. We have seen these necessities of life experience a great and sudden fall, and yet at the same time a still larger proportion of the population requiring parish assistance.

It is now said that taxation is the sole cause of their distresses, and of the extraordinary stagnation in the demand for labour; yet I feel the firmest conviction, that if the whole of the taxes were removed to-morrow, this stagnation, instead of being at an end, would be considerably aggravated. Such an event would cause another great and general rise in the value of the circulating medium, and bring with it that discouragement to industry with which such a convulsion in society must ever be attended. If, as has been represented, the labouring classes now pay more than half of what

they receive in taxes, he must know very little indeed of the principles on which the wages of labour are regulated, who can for a moment suppose that, when the commodities on which they are expended have fallen one half by the removal of taxes, these wages themselves would still continue of the same nominal value. Were they to remain but for a short time the same, while all commodities had fallen, and the circulating medium had been reduced in proportion, it would be quickly seen that multitudes of them would be at once thrown out of employment.

The effects of taxation are no doubt in many cases pernicious in a very high degree; but it may be laid down as a rule which has few exceptions, that the relief obtained by taking off a tax, is in no respect equal to the injury inflicted in laying it on; and generally it may be said that the specific evil of taxation consists in the check which it gives to production, rather than the diminution which it occasions in demand. With regard to all commodities indeed of home production and home demand,

mand, it is quite certain that the conversion of capital into revenue, which is the effect of loans, must necessarily increase the proportion of demand to the supply; and the conversion of the revenue of individuals into the revenue of the government, which is the effect of taxes properly imposed, however hard upon the individuals so taxed, can have no tendency to diminish the general amount of demand. It will of course diminish the demands of the persons taxed by diminishing their powers of purchasing; but to the exact amount that the powers of these persons are diminished, will the powers of the government and of those employed by it be increased. If an estate of five thousand a year has a mortgage upon it of two thousand, two families, both in very good circumstances, may be living upon the rents of it, and both have considerable demands for houses, furniture, carriages, broad cloth, silks, cottons, &c. The man who owns the estate is certainly much worse off than if the mortgage-deed was burnt, but the manufacturers and labourers who supply the silks, broad cloth, cot-

tons, &c., are so far from being likely to be benefited by such burning, that it would be a considerable time before the new wants and tastes of the enriched owner had restored the former demand; and if he were to take a fancy to spend his additional income in horses, hounds and menial servants, which is probable, not only would the manufacturers and labourers who had before supplied their silks, cloths and cottons, be thrown out of employment, but the substituted demand would be very much less favourable to the increase of the capital and general resources of the country.

The foregoing illustration represents more nearly than may generally be imagined the effects of a national debt on the labouring classes of society, and the very great mistake of supposing that, because the demands of a considerable portion of the community would be increased by the extinction of the debt, these increased demands would not be balanced, and often more than balanced, by the loss of the demand from the fundholders and government.

It is by no means intended by these observations

servations to intimate that a national debt may not be so heavy as to be extremely prejudicial to a state. The division and distribution of property, which is so beneficial when carried only to a certain extent, is fatal to production when pushed to extremity. The division of an estate of five thousand a year will generally tend to increase demand, stimulate production and improve the structure of society ; but the division of an estate of eighty pounds a year will generally be attended with effects directly the reverse.

But, besides the probability that the division of property occasioned by a national debt may in many cases be pushed too far, the process of the division is effected by means which sometimes greatly embarrass production. This embarrassment must necessarily take place to a certain extent in almost every species of taxation ; but under favourable circumstances it is overcome by the stimulus given to demand. During the late war, from the prodigious increase of produce and population, it may fairly be presumed that the power of production

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was not essentially impeded, notwithstanding the enormous amount of taxation ; but in the state of things which has occurred since the peace, and under a most extraordinary fall of the exchangeable value of the raw produce of the land, and a great consequent diminution of the circulating medium, the very sudden increase of the weight and pressure of taxation must greatly aggravate the other causes which discourage production. This effect has been felt to a considerable extent on the land ; but the distress in this quarter is already much mitigated ; and among the mercantile and manufacturing classes, where the greatest numbers are without employment, the evil obviously arises, not so much from the want of capital and the means of production, as the want of a market for the commodity when produced—a want, for which the removal of taxes, however proper, and indeed absolutely necessary as a permanent measure, is certainly not the immediate and specific remedy.

The principal causes of the increase of pauperism, independently of the present crisis,

crisis, are, first, the general increase of the manufacturing system and the unavoidable variations of manufacturing labour ; and secondly, and more particularly, the practice which has been adopted in some counties, and is now spreading pretty generally all over the kingdom, of paying a considerable portion of what ought to be the wages of labour out of the parish rates. During the war, when the demand for labour was great and increasing, it is quite certain that nothing but a practice of this kind could for any time have prevented the wages of labour from rising fully in proportion to the necessaries of life, in whatever degree these necessaries might have been raised by taxation. It was seen, consequently, that in those parts of Great Britain where this practice prevailed the least, the wages of labour rose the most. This was the case in Scotland, and some parts of the North of England, where the improvement in the condition of the labouring classes, and their increased command over the necessaries and conveniences of life, were particularly remarkable. And if, in some other parts
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of the country, where the practice did not greatly prevail, and especially in the towns, wages did not rise in the same degree, it was owing to the influx and competition of the cheaply raised population of the surrounding counties.

It is a just remark of Adam Smith, that the attempts of the legislature to raise the pay of curates had always been ineffectual, on account of the cheap and abundant supply of them, occasioned by the bounties given to young persons educated for the church at the universities. And it is equally true that no human efforts can keep up the price of day-labour so as to enable a man to support on his earnings a family of a moderate size, so long as those who have more than two children are considered as having a valid claim to parish assistance.

If this system were to become universal, and I own it appears to me that the poor-laws naturally lead to it, there is no reason whatever why parish assistance should not by degrees begin earlier and earlier ; and I do not hesitate to assert that, if the government and constitution of the country were in

in all other respects as perfect as the wildest visionary thinks he could make them ; if parliaments were annual, suffrage universal, wars, taxes and pensions unknown, and the civil list fifteen hundred a year, the great body of the community might still be a collection of paupers.

I have been accused of proposing a law to prohibit the poor from marrying. This is not true. So far from proposing such a law, I have distinctly said that, if any person chooses to marry without having a prospect of being able to maintain a family, he ought to have the most perfect liberty so to do ; and whenever any prohibitory propositions have been suggested to me as advisable by persons who have drawn wrong inferences from what I have said, I have steadily and uniformly reprobated them. I am indeed most decidedly of opinion that any positive law to limit the age of marriage would be both unjust and immoral ; and my greatest objection to a system of equality and the system of the poor-laws (two systems which, however different in their outset, are of a nature calculated

calculated to produce the same results) is, that the society in which they are effectively carried into execution, will ultimately be reduced to the miserable alternative of choosing between universal want and the enactment of *direct* laws against marriage.

What I have really proposed is a very different measure. It is the *gradual* and *very gradual* abolition of the poor-laws*. And the reason why I have ventured to suggest a proposition of this kind for consideration is my firm conviction, that they have lowered very decidedly the wages of the labouring classes, and made their general condition essentially worse than it would have been if these laws had never existed. Their operation is every where depressing ; but it falls peculiarly hard upon the labouring classes in great towns. In country parishes the poor do really receive some compensation for their low wages ; their children, beyond a certain number, are really supported by the parish; and though it must be a most grating reflection to a labouring man, that

* So gradual as not to affect any individuals at present alive, or who will be born within the next two years.

it is scarcely possible for him to marry without becoming the father of paupers; yet if he can reconcile himself to this prospect, the compensation, such as it is, is no doubt made to him. But in London and all the great towns of the kingdom, the evil is suffered without the compensation. The population raised by bounties in the country naturally and necessarily flows into the towns, and as naturally and necessarily tends to lower wages in them; while in point of fact, those who marry in towns, and have large families, receive no assistance from their parishes, unless they are actually starving; and altogether the assistance which the manufacturing classes obtain for the support of their families, in aid of their lowered wages, is perfectly inconsiderable.

To remedy the effects of this competition from the country, the artificers and manufacturers in towns have been apt to combine, with a view to keep up the price of labour and to prevent persons from working below a certain rate. But such combinations are not only illegal, but irrational and ineffectual; and if the supply of workmen in any particular

particular branch of trade be such as would naturally lower wages, the keeping them up forcibly must have the effect of throwing so many out of employment, as to make the expense of their support fully equal to the gain acquired by the higher wages, and thus render these higher wages in reference to the whole body perfectly futile.

It may be distinctly stated to be an *absolute impossibility* that all the different classes of society should be both well paid and fully employed, if the supply of labour on the whole exceed the demand ; and as the poor-laws tend in the most marked manner to make the supply of labour exceed the demand for it, their effect must be, either to lower universally all wages, or, if some are kept up artificially, to throw great numbers of workmen out of employment, and thus constantly to increase the poverty and distress of the labouring classes of society.

If these things be so (and I am firmly convinced that they are) it cannot but be a subject of the deepest regret to those who are anxious for the happiness of the great mass of the community, that the writers which

which are now most extensively read among the common people should have selected for the subject of reprobation exactly that line of conduct which can alone generally improve their condition, and for the subject of approbation that system which must inevitably depress them in poverty and wretchedness.

'They are taught that there is no occasion whatever for them to put any sort of restraint upon their inclinations, or exercise any degree of prudence in the affair of marriage; because the parish is bound to provide for all that are born. They are taught that there is as little occasion to cultivate habits of economy, and make use of the means afforded them by saving banks, to lay by their earnings while they are single, in order to furnish a cottage when they marry, and enable them to set out in life with decency and comfort; because, I suppose, the parish is bound to cover their nakedness, and to find them a bed and a chair in a work-house.

'They are taught that any endeavour on the part of the higher classes of society to inculcate

inculcate the duties of prudence and economy can only arise from a desire to save the money which they pay in poor-rates ; although it is absolutely certain that the *only* mode consistent with the laws of morality and religion of giving to the poor the largest share of the property of the rich, without sinking the whole community in misery, is the exercise on the part of the poor of prudence in marriage, and of economy both before and after it.

They are taught that the command of the Creator to increase and multiply is meant to contradict those laws which he has himself appointed for the increase and multiplication of the human race ; and that it is equally the duty of a person to marry early, when, from the impossibility of adding to the food of the country in which he lives, the greater part of his offspring must die prematurely, and consequently no multiplication follow from it, as when the children of such marriages can all be well maintained, and there is room and food for a great and rapid increase of population.

They are taught that, in relation to the condition

condition of the labouring classes, there is no other difference between such a country as England, which has been long well peopled, and where the land, which is not yet taken into cultivation, is comparatively barren, and such a country as America, where millions and millions of acres of fine land are yet to be had for a trifle, except what arises from taxation.

And they are taught, O monstrous absurdity! that the only reason why the American labourer earns a dollar a day, and the English labourer earns two shillings, is that the English labourer pays a great part of these two shillings in taxes.

Some of these doctrines are so grossly absurd that I have no doubt they are rejected at once by the common sense of many of the labouring classes. It cannot but strike them that, if their main dependence for the support of their children is to be on the parish, they can only expect parish fare, parish clothing, parish furniture, a parish house and parish government, and they must know that persons living in this way cannot possibly be in a happy and prosperous state. It

It can scarcely escape the notice of the common mechanic, that the scarcer workmen are upon any occasion, the greater share do they retain of the value of what they produce for their masters; and it is a most natural inference, that prudence in marriage, which is the only moral means of preventing an excess of workmen above the demand, can be the only mode of giving to the poor permanently a large share of all that is produced in the country.

A common man, who has read his Bible, must be convinced that a command given to a rational being by a merciful God cannot be intended so to be interpreted as to produce only disease and death instead of multiplication; and a plain sound understanding would make him to see that, if, in a country in which little or no increase of food is to be obtained, every man were to marry at eighteen or twenty, when he generally feels most inclined to it, the consequence must be increased poverty, increased disease and increased mortality, and not increased numbers, as long at least as it continues to be true (which he will hardly be

be disposed to doubt) that additional numbers cannot live without additional food.

A moderately shrewd judgment would prompt any labourer acquainted with the nature of land to suspect that there must be some great difference, quite independent of taxation, between a country such as America, which might easily be made to support fifty times as many inhabitants as it contains at present, and a country such as England, which could not without extraordinary exertions be made to support two or three times as many. He would at least see that there would be a prodigious difference in the power of maintaining an additional number of cattle, between a small farm already well stocked, and a very large one which had not the fiftieth part of what it might be made to maintain; and as he would know that both rich and poor must live upon the produce of the earth as well as all other animals, he would be disposed to conclude that what was so obviously true in one case, could not be false in the other. These considerations might make him think it natural and probable that in

those countries where there was a great want of people, the wages of labour would be such as to encourage early marriages and large families, for the best of all possible reasons, because all that are born may be very easily and comfortably supported ; but that in those countries which were already nearly full, the wages of labour cannot be such as to give the same encouragement to early marriages, for a reason surely not much worse, because the persons so brought into the world cannot be properly supported.

There are few of our mechanics and labourers who have not heard of the high prices of bread, meat and labour in this country compared with the nations of the continent, and they have generally heard at the same time that these high prices were chiefly occasioned by taxation, which, though it had raised among other things the money wages of labour, had done harm rather than good to the labourer, because it had before raised the price of the bread and beer and other articles in which he spent his earnings. With this amount of information,

information, the meanest understanding would revolt at the idea that the very same cause which had kept the money price of labour in all the nations of Europe much lower than in England, namely, the absence of taxation, had been the means of raising it to more than double in America. He would feel quite convinced that, whatever might be the cause of the high money wages of labour in America, which he might not perhaps readily understand, it must be something very different indeed from the mere absence of taxation, which could only have an effect exactly opposite.

With regard to the improved condition of the lower classes of people in France since the revolution, which has also been much insisted upon; if the circumstances accompanying it were told at the same time, it would afford the strongest presumption against the doctrines which have been lately promulgated. The improved condition of the labouring classes in France since the revolution has been accompanied by a greatly diminished proportion of births, which has had its natural and ne-

cessary effect in giving to these classes a greater share of the produce of the country, and has kept up the advantage arising from the sale of the church lands and other national domains, which would otherwise have been lost in a short time. The effect of the revolution in France has been, to make every person depend more upon himself and less upon others. The labouring classes are therefore become more industrious, more saving and more prudent in marriage than formerly; and it is quite certain that without these effects the revolution would have done nothing for them. An improved government has, no doubt, a natural tendency to produce these effects, and thus to improve the condition of the poor. But if an extensive system of parochial relief, and such doctrines as have lately been inculcated, counteract them, and prevent the labouring classes from depending upon their own prudence and industry, then any change for the better in other respects becomes comparatively a matter of very little importance; and, under the best form of government imaginable,
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there may be thousands on thousands out of employment and half starved.

If it be taught that all who are born have a *right* to support on the land, whatever be their number, and that there is no occasion to exercise any prudence in the affair of marriage so as to check this number, the temptations, according to all the known principles of human nature, will inevitably be yielded to, and more and more will gradually become dependent on parish assistance. There cannot therefore be a greater inconsistency and contradiction than that those who maintain these doctrines respecting the poor, should still complain of the number of paupers. Such doctrines and a crowd of paupers are unavoidably united ; and it is utterly beyond the power of any revolution or change of government to separate them.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Agricultural System.

AS it is the nature of agriculture to produce subsistence for a greater number of families than can be employed in the business of cultivation, it might perhaps be supposed that a nation which strictly pursued an agricultural system would always have more food than was necessary for its inhabitants, and that its population could never be checked from the want of the means of subsistence.

It is indeed obviously true that the increase of such a country is not immediately checked, either by the want of power to produce, or even by the deficiency of the actual produce of the soil compared with the population. Yet if we examine the condition of its labouring classes, we shall find that the real wages of their labour are such as essentially to check and regulate their

their increase, by checking and regulating their command over the means of subsistence.

A country under certain circumstances of soil and situation, and with a deficient capital, may find it advantageous to purchase foreign commodities with its raw produce rather than manufacture them at home: and in this case it will necessarily grow more raw produce than it consumes. But this state of things is very little connected either with the permanent condition of the lower classes of the society or the rate of their increase; and in a country where the agricultural system entirely predominates, and the great mass of its industry is directed towards the land, the condition of the people is subject to almost every degree of variation.

Under the agricultural system perhaps are to be found the two extremes in the condition of the poor; instances where they are in the best state, and instances where they are in the worst state of any of which we have accounts.

In a country where there is an abundance

dance of good land, where there are no difficulties in the way of its purchase and distribution, and where there is an easy foreign vent for raw produce, both the profits of stock and the wages of labour will be high. These high profits and high wages, if habits of economy pretty generally prevail, will furnish the means of a rapid accumulation of capital and a great and continued demand for labour, while the rapid increase of population which will ensue will maintain undiminished the demand for produce, and check the fall of profits. If the extent of territory be considerable, and the population comparatively inconsiderable, the land may remain understocked both with capital and people for some length of time, notwithstanding a rapid increase of both ; and it is under these circumstances of the agricultural system that labour is able to command the greatest portion of the necessaries of life, and that the condition of the labouring classes of society is the best.

The only drawback to the wealth of the labouring classes under these circumstances is

is the relatively low value of the raw produce.

If a considerable part of the manufactured commodities used in such a country be purchased by the export of its raw produce, it follows as a necessary consequence that the relative value of its raw produce will be lower, and of its manufactured produce higher, than in the countries with which such a trade is carried on. But where a given portion of raw produce will not command so much of manufactured and foreign commodities as in other countries, the condition of the labourer cannot be exactly measured by the quantity of raw produce which falls to his share. If, for instance, in one country the yearly earnings of a labourer amount in money value to fifteen quarters of wheat, and in another to nine, it would be incorrect to infer that their relative condition, and the comforts which they enjoy, were in the same proportion, because the whole of a labourer's earnings are not spent in food; and if that part which is not so spent will, in the country where the value of fifteen quarters

quarters is earned, not go near so far in the purchase of clothes and other conveniences as in the countries where the value of nine quarters is earned, it is clear that altogether the situation of the labourer in the latter country may approach nearer to that of the labourer in the former than might at first be supposed.

At the same time it should be recollected that *quantity* always tends powerfully to counterbalance any deficiency of value; and the labourer who earns the greatest number of quarters may still command the greatest quantity of necessaries and conveniences combined, though not to the extent implied by the proportions of the raw produce.

America affords a practical instance of the agricultural system in a state the most favourable to the condition of the labouring classes. The nature of the country has been such as to make it answer to employ a very large proportion of its capital in agriculture ; and the consequence has been a very rapid increase of stock. This rapid increase of stock has kept up a steady and continued

continued demand for labour. The labouring classes have in consequence been peculiarly well paid. They have been able to command an unusual quantity of the necessaries of life, and the progress of population has been unusually rapid.

Yet even here, some little drawback has been felt from the relative cheapness of corn. As America till the late war imported the greatest part of its manufactures from England, and as England imported flour and wheat from America, the value of food in America compared with manufactures must have been decidedly less than in England. Nor would this effect take place merely with relation to the foreign commodities imported into America, but also to those of its home manufactures, in which it has no particular advantage. In agriculture, the abundance of good land would counterbalance the high wages of labour and high profits of stock, and keep the price of corn moderate, notwithstanding the great expense of these two elements of price. But in the production of manufactured commodities they must necessarily

necessarily tell, without any particular advantage to counterbalance them, and must in general occasion in home goods, as well as foreign, a high price compared with food.

Under these circumstances, the condition of the labouring classes of society cannot in point of conveniences and comforts be so much better than that of the labourers of other countries as the relative quantity of food which they earn might seem to indicate ; and this conclusion is sufficiently confirmed by experience. In some very intelligent Travels through a great part of England, written in 1810 and 1811 by Mr. Simond, a French gentleman, who had resided above twenty years in America, the author seems to have been evidently much struck with the air of convenience and comfort in the houses of our peasantry, and the neatness and cleanliness of their dress. In some parts of his tour he saw so many neat cottages, so much good clothing, and so little appearance of poverty and distress, that he could not help wondering where the poor of England and their dwellings were concealed. These observations coming

coming from an able, accurate and apparently most impartial observer, just landed from America and visiting England for the first time, are curious and instructive; and the facts which they notice, though they may arise in part from the different habits and modes of life prevailing in the two countries, must be occasioned in a considerable degree by the causes above mentioned.

A very striking instance of the disadvantageous effect of a low relative price of food on the condition of the poor may be observed in Ireland. In Ireland the funds for the maintenance of labour have increased so rapidly during the last century, and so large a portion of that sort of food which forms the principal support of the lower classes of society has been awarded to them, that the increase of population has been more rapid than in almost any known country, except America. The Irish labourer paid in potatoes has earned perhaps the means of subsistence for double the number of persons that could be supported by the earnings of an English labourer paid in wheat;

wheat; and the increase of population in the two countries during the last century has been nearly in proportion to the relative quantity of the customary food awarded to the labourers in each. But their general condition with respect to conveniences and comforts are very far indeed from being in a similar proportion. The great quantity of food which land will bear when planted with potatoes, and the consequent cheapness of the labour supported by them, tends rather to raise than to lower the rents of land, and as far as rent goes, to keep up the price of the materials of manufactures and all other sorts of raw produce, except potatoes. In the raw materials of home manufactures, therefore, a great relative disadvantage will be suffered, and a still greater both in the raw and manufactured produce of foreign countries. The exchangeable value of the food which the Irish labourer earns above what he and his family consume will go but a very little way in the purchase of clothing, lodging and other conveniences; and the consequence is that his condition in these respects

respects is extremely miserable, at the same time that his means of subsistence, such as they are, may be comparatively abundant.

In Ireland the money price of labour is not much more than the half of what it is in England. The quantity of food earned by no means makes up for its deficient value. A certain portion therefore of the Irish labourer's wages (a fourth or a fifth for instance) will go but a very little way in the purchase of manufactures and foreign produce. In America, on the other hand, even the money wages of labour are nearly double those of England. Though the American labourer therefore cannot purchase manufactures and foreign produce with the food that he earns so cheap as the English labourer, yet the greater quantity of this food makes up for its deficiency of relative value. His condition compared with the labouring classes of England, though it may not be so much superior as their relative means of subsistence might indicate, must still on the whole have decidedly the advantage; and altogether, perhaps,

haps, America may be produced as an instance of the agricultural system in which the condition of the labouring classes is the best of any that we know.

The instances where, under the agricultural system, the condition of the lower classes of society is very wretched, are more frequent. When the accumulation of capital stops, whatever may be the cause, the population, before it comes to a stand, will always be pressed on as near to the limits of the actual means of subsistence, as the habits of the lower classes of the society will allow; that is, the real wages of labour will sink, till they are only just sufficient to maintain a stationary population. Should this happen, as it frequently does, while land is still in abundance and capital scarce, the profits of stock will naturally be high; but corn will be very cheap, owing to the goodness and plenty of the land, and the stationary demand for it, notwithstanding the high profits of stock; while these high profits, together with the usual want of skill and proper division of labour, which attend a scanty capital, will render all

all domestic manufactured commodities comparatively very dear. This state of things will naturally be unfavourable to the generation of those habits of prudential restraint which most frequently arise from the custom of enjoying conveniences and comforts, and it is to be expected that the population will not stop till the wages of labour, estimated even in food, are very low. But in a country where the wages of labour estimated in food are low, and that food is relatively of a very low value, both with regard to domestic and foreign manufactures, the condition of the labouring classes of society must be the worst possible.

Poland, and some parts of Russia, Siberia and European Turkey, afford instances of this kind. In Poland the population seems to be almost stationary or very slowly progressive; and as both the population and produce are scanty, compared with the extent of territory, we may infer with certainty that its capital is scanty, and yet slowly progressive. It follows, therefore, that the demand for labour increases very slowly, and that the real wages of labour, or

the command of the labouring classes over the necessaries and conveniences of life, are such as to keep the population down to the level of the slowly increasing quantity that is awarded to them. And as from the state of the country the peasantry cannot have been much accustomed to conveniences and comforts, the checks to its population are more likely to be of the positive than of the preventive kind.

Yet here corn is in abundance; and great quantities of it are yearly exported. But it appears clearly that it is not either the power of the country to produce food, or even what it actually produces, that limits and regulates the progress of population, but the quantity which in the actual state of things is awarded to the labourer, and the rate at which the funds so appropriated increase.

In the present case the demand for labour is very small; and though the population is inconsiderable, it is greater than the scanty capital of the country can fully employ; the condition of the labourer therefore is depressed by his being able to command

command only such a quantity of food as will maintain a stationary or very slowly increasing population. It is further depressed by the low relative value of the food that he earns, which gives to any surplus he may possess a very small power in the purchase of manufactured commodities or foreign produce.

Under these circumstances, we cannot be surprised that all accounts of Poland should represent the condition of the lower classes of society as extremely miserable; and the other parts of Europe, which resemble Poland in the state of their land and capital, resemble it in the condition of their people.

In justice however to the agricultural system, it should be observed that the premature check to the capital and the demand for labour, which occurs in some of the countries of Europe, while land continues in considerable plenty, is not occasioned by the particular direction of their industry, but by the vices of the government and the structure of the society, which prevent its full and fair development in that direction.

Poland is continually brought forward as an example of the miserable effects of the agricultural system. But nothing surely can be less fair. The misery of Poland does not arise from its directing its industry chiefly to agriculture, but from the little encouragement given to industry of any kind, owing to the state of property and the servile condition of the people. While the land is cultivated by boors, the produce of whose exertions belongs entirely to their masters, and the whole society consists mainly of these degraded beings and the lords and owners of great tracts of territory, there will evidently be no class of persons possessed of the means either of furnishing an adequate demand at home for the surplus produce of the soil, or of accumulating fresh capital and increasing the demand for labour. In this miserable state of things, the best remedy would unquestionably be the introduction of manufactures and commerce; because the introduction of manufactures and commerce could alone liberate the mass of the people from slavery and give the necessary stimulus to industry and accumulation. But were the people already free and industrious, and landed property easily

easily divisible and alienable, it might still answer to such a country as Poland to purchase its finer manufactures from foreign countries by means of its raw products, and thus to continue essentially agricultural, for many years. Under these new circumstances however, it would present a totally different picture from that which it exhibits at present; and the condition of the people would more resemble that of the inhabitants of the United States of America than of the inhabitants of the unimproved countries of Europe. Indeed America is perhaps the only modern instance of the fair operation of the agricultural system. In every country of Europe, and in most of its colonies in other parts of the world, formidable obstacles still exist to the employment of capital upon the land, arising from the remains of the feudal system. But these obstacles which have essentially impeded cultivation have been very far indeed from proportionably encouraging other branches of industry. Commerce and manufactures are necessary to agriculture; but agriculture is still more necessary to commerce and manufactures. It

must

must ever be true that the surplus produce of the cultivators, taken in its most enlarged sense, measures and limits the growth of that part of the society which is not employed upon the land. Throughout the whole world the number of manufacturers, of merchants, of proprietors and of persons engaged in the various civil and military professions, must be exactly proportioned to this surplus produce, and cannot in the nature of things increase beyond it. If the earth had been so niggardly of her produce as to oblige all her inhabitants to labour for it, no manufacturers or idle persons could ever have existed. But her first intercourse with man was a voluntary present, not very large indeed, but sufficient as a fund for his subsistence till he could procure a greater. And the power to procure a greater was given to him in that quality of the earth by which it may be made to yield a much larger quantity of food, and of the materials of clothing and lodging, than is necessary to feed, clothe and lodge the persons employed in the cultivation of the soil. This quality is the foundation of that surplus

surplus produce which peculiarly distinguishes the industry employed upon the land. In proportion as the labour and ingenuity of man exercised upon the land have increased this surplus produce, leisure has been given to a greater number of persons to employ themselves in all the inventions which embellish civilized life; while the desire to profit by these inventions has continued to stimulate the cultivators to increase their surplus produce. This desire indeed may be considered as almost absolutely necessary to give it its proper value, and to encourage its further extension; but still the order of precedence is, strictly speaking, the surplus produce; because the funds for the subsistence of the manufacturer must be advanced to him before he can complete his work; and no step can be taken in any other sort of industry unless the cultivators obtain from the soil more than they themselves consume.

If in asserting the peculiar productiveness of the labour employed upon the land, we look only to the clear monied rent yielded to a certain number of proprietors, we undoubtedly

doubtedly consider the subject in a very contracted point of view. In the advanced stages of society, this rent forms indeed the most prominent portion of the surplus produce here meant; but it may exist equally in the shape of high wages and profits during the earlier periods of cultivation, when there is little or no rent. The labourer who earns a value equal to fifteen quarters of corn in the year may have only a family of three or four children, and not consume in kind above five or six quarters; and the owner of the farming stock, which yields high profits, may consume but a very moderate proportion of them in food and raw materials. All the rest, whether in the shape of wages and profits, or of rents, may be considered as a surplus produce from the soil, which affords the means of subsistence and the materials of clothing and lodging to a certain number of people according to its extent, some of whom may live without manual exertions, and others employ themselves in modifying the raw materials obtained from the earth into

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the forms best suited to the gratification of man.

It will depend of course entirely upon its answering to a country to exchange a part of the surplus produce for foreign commodities, instead of consuming it at home, whether it is to be considered as mainly agricultural or otherwise. And such an exchange of raw produce for manufactures, or peculiar foreign products, may for a period of some extent suit a state, which might resemble Poland in scarcely any other feature but that of exporting corn.

It appears then, that countries in which the industry of the inhabitants is principally directed towards the land, and in which corn continues to be exported, may enjoy great abundance or experience great want, according to the particular circumstances in which they are placed. They will in general not be much exposed to the temporary evils of scarcity arising from the variations of the seasons ; but the quantity of food permanently awarded to the labourer

bourer may be such as not to allow of an increase of population ; and their state, in respect to their being progressive, stationary or declining, will depend upon other causes than that of directing their attention principally to agriculture.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Commercial System.

A COUNTRY which excels in commerce and manufactures, may purchase corn from a great variety of others; and it may be supposed, perhaps, that, proceeding upon this system, it may continue to purchase an increasing quantity, and to maintain a rapidly increasing population, till the lands of all the nations with which it trades are fully cultivated. As this is an event necessarily at a great distance, it may appear that the population of such a country will not be checked from the difficulty of procuring subsistence till after the lapse of a great number of ages.

There are, however, causes constantly in operation, which will occasion the pressure of this difficulty, long before the event here contemplated has taken place, and while the means of raising food in the surrounding countries

countries may still be comparatively abundant.

In the first place, advantages which depend exclusively upon capital and skill, and the present possession of particular channels of commerce, cannot in their nature be permanent. We know how difficult it is to confine improvements in machinery to a single spot; we know that it is the constant object, both of individuals and countries, to increase their capital; and we know, from the past history of commercial states, that the channels of trade are not unfrequently taking a different direction. It is unreasonable therefore to expect that any one country, merely by the force of skill and capital, should remain in possession of markets uninterrupted by foreign competition. But, when a powerful foreign competition takes place, the exportable commodities of the country in question must soon fall to prices which will essentially reduce profits; and the fall of profits will diminish both the power and the will to save. Under these circumstances the accumulation of capital will be slow

slow, and the demand for labour proportionably slow, till it comes nearly to a stand; while, perhaps, the new competitors, either by raising their own raw materials or by some other advantages, may still be increasing their capitals and population with some degree of rapidity.

But, secondly, even if it were possible for a considerable time to exclude any formidable foreign competition, it is found that domestic competition produces almost unavoidably the same effects. If a machine be invented in a particular country, by the aid of which one man can do the work of ten, the possessors of it will of course at first make very unusual profits; but, as soon as the invention is generally known, so much capital and industry will be brought into this new and profitable employment, as to make its products greatly exceed both the foreign and domestic demand at the old prices. These prices, therefore, will continue to fall, till the stock and labour employed in this direction cease to yield unusual profits. In this case it is evident that; though in an early period

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of such a manufacture, the product of the industry of one man for a day might have been exchanged for such a portion of food as would support forty or fifty persons ; yet, at a subsequent period, the product of the same industry might not purchase the support of ten.

In the cotton trade of this country, which has extended itself so wonderfully during the last twenty-five years, very little effect has hitherto been produced by foreign competition^a. The very great fall which has taken place in the prices of cotton goods has been almost exclusively owing to domestic competition ; and this competition has so glutted both the home and foreign markets, that the present capitals employed in the trade, notwithstanding the very peculiar advantages which they possess from the saving of labour, have ceased to possess any advantage whatever in the general rate of their profits. Although, by means of the admirable machinery used in the spinning of cotton, one boy or girl can now do as much as many grown persons could do

* 1816.

formerly ;

formerly ; yet neither the wages of the labourer, nor the profits of his master, are higher than in those employments where no machinery is used, and no saving of labour accomplished.

The country has, however, in the mean time, been very greatly benefitted. Not only have all its inhabitants been enabled to obtain a superior fabric for clothing, at a less expense of labour and property, which must be considered as a great and permanent advantage ; but the high temporary profits of the trade have occasioned a great accumulation of capital, and consequently a great demand for labour ; while the extending markets abroad and the new values thrown into the market at home, have created such a demand for the products of every species of industry, agricultural and colonial, as well as commercial and manufacturing, as to prevent a fall of profits.

This country, from the extent of its lands, and its rich colonial possessions, has a large *arena* for the employment of an increasing capital; and the general rate of its profits are not, as it appears, very easily and rapidly reduced

reduced by accumulation. But a country, such as we are considering, engaged principally in manufactures, and unable to direct its industry to the same variety of pursuits, would sooner find its rate of profits diminished by an increase of capital, and no ingenuity in machinery could save it, after a certain period, from low profits and low wages, and their natural consequences, a check to population.

Thirdly, a country which is obliged to purchase both the raw materials of its manufactures and the means of subsistence for its population from foreign countries, is almost entirely dependent for the increase of its wealth and population on the increasing wealth and demands of the countries with which it trades.

It has been sometimes said—that a manufacturing country is no more dependent upon the country which supplies it with food and raw materials, than the agricultural country is on that which manufactures for it; but this is really an abuse of terms. A country with great resources in land may find it decidedly for its advantage to employ

ploy the main part of its capital in cultivation and to import its manufactures. In so doing, it will often employ the whole of its industry most productively, and most rapidly increase its stock. But, if the slackness of its neighbours in manufacturing, or any other cause, should either considerably check or altogether prevent the importation of manufactures, a country with food and raw materials provided at home cannot long at a loss. For a time it would not certainly be so well supplied; but manufacturers and artisans would soon be found, and would soon acquire tolerable skill^a; and though the capital and population of the country might not, under the new circumstances in which it was placed, increase so rapidly as before, it would still have the power of increasing in both to a great and almost undefinable extent.

On the other hand, if food and raw materials were denied to a nation merely manufacturing, it is obvious that it could not longer exist. But not only does the ab-

* This has been fully exemplified in America (1816).

solute existence of such a nation, on an extreme supposition, depend upon its foreign commerce, but its progress in wealth must be almost entirely measured by the progress and demand of the countries which deal with it. However skilful, industrious and saving such a nation might be, if its customers, from indolence and want of accumulation, would not or could not take off a yearly increasing value of its commodities, the effects of its skill and machinery would be but of very short duration.

That the cheapness of manufactured commodities, occasioned by skill and machinery in one country, is calculated to encourage an increase of raw produce in others, no person can doubt ; but we know at the same time that high profits may continue for a considerable period in an indolent and ill-governed state, without producing an increase of wealth ; yet, unless such an increase of wealth and demand were produced in the surrounding countries, the increasing ingenuity and exertions of the manufacturing and commercial state would be lost in continually falling prices.

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It would not only be obliged, as its skill and capital increased, to give a larger quantity of manufactured produce for the raw produce which it received in return ; but it might be unable, even with the temptation of reduced prices, to stimulate its customers to such purchases as would allow of an increasing importation of food and raw materials ; and without such an increasing importation, it is quite obvious that the population must become stationary.

It would come to the same thing, whether this inability to obtain an increasing quantity of food were occasioned by the advancing money price of corn or the falling money price of manufactures. In either case the effect would be the same ; and it is certain that this effect might take place in either way, from increasing competition and accumulation in the manufacturing nation, and the want of them in the agricultural, long before any essential increase of difficulty had occurred in the production of corn.

Fourthly. A nation which is obliged to purchase from others nearly the whole of

its raw materials, and the means of its subsistence, is not only dependent entirely upon the demands of its customers, as they may be variously affected by indolence, industry or caprice, but it is subjected to a necessary and unavoidable diminution of demand in the natural progress of these countries towards that proportion of skill and capital which they may reasonably be expected after a certain time to possess. It is generally an accidental and temporary, not a natural and permanent, division of labour, which constitutes one state the manufacturer and the carrier of others. While, in these landed nations, agricultural profits continue very high, it may fully answer to them to pay others as their manufacturers and carriers; but when the profits on land fall, or the tenures on which it can be held are not such as to encourage the investment of an accumulating capital, the owner of this capital will naturally look towards commerce and manufactures for its employment; and, according to the just reasoning of Adam Smith and the Economists, finding at home both the materials

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of manufactures, the means of subsistence, and the power of carrying on their own trade with foreign countries, they will probably be able to conduct the business of manufacturing and carrying for themselves at a cheaper rate than if they allowed it to continue in the hands of others. As long as the agricultural nations continued to apply their increasing capital principally to the land, this increase of capital would be of the greatest possible advantage to the manufacturing and commercial nation. It would be indeed the main cause and great regulator of its progress in wealth and population. But after they had turned their attention to manufactures and commerce, their further increase of capital would be the signal of decay and destruction to the manufactures and commerce which they had before supported. And thus, in the natural progress of national improvement, and without the competition of superior skill and capital, a purely commercial state must be undersold and driven out of the markets by those who possess the advantage of land.

In the distribution of wealth during the progress

progress of improvement, the interests of an independent state are essentially different from those of a province, a point which has not been sufficiently attended to. If agricultural capital increases and agricultural profits diminish in Sussex, the overflowing stock will go to London, Manchester, Liverpool, or some other place where it can probably be engaged in manufactures or commerce more advantageously than at home. But if Sussex were an independent kingdom, this could not take place; and the corn which is now sent to London must be withdrawn to support manufacturers and traders living within its confines. If England therefore had continued to be separated into the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy, London could not possibly have been what it is; and that distribution of wealth and population which takes place at present, and which we may fairly presume is the most beneficial to the whole of the realm, would have been essentially changed, if the object had been to accumulate the greatest quantity of wealth and population in particular districts instead

stead of the whole island. But at all times the interest of each independent state is to accumulate the greatest quantity of wealth within its limits. Consequently, the interest of an independent state, with regard to the countries with which it trades, can rarely be the same as the interest of a province with regard to the empire to which it belongs ; and the accumulation of capital which would occasion the withdrawing of the exports of corn in the one case, would leave them perfectly undisturbed in the other.

If, from the operation of one or more of the causes above enumerated, the importation of corn into a manufacturing and commercial country should be essentially checked, and should either actually decrease, or be prevented from increasing, it is quite evident that its population must be checked nearly in the same proportion.

Venice presents a striking instance of a commercial state, at once stopped in its progress to wealth and population by foreign competition. The discovery made by the Portuguese of a passage to India by
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the Cape of Good Hope completely turned the channel of the Indian trade. The high profits of the Venetians, which had been the foundation of their rapidly increasing wealth and of their extraordinary preponderance as a naval and commercial power, were not only suddenly reduced; but the trade itself, on which these high profits had been made, was almost annihilated, and their power and wealth were shortly contracted to those more confined limits which suited their natural resources.

In the middle of the 15th century, Bruges in Flanders was the great *entrepôt* of the trade between the north and the south of Europe. Early in the 16th century its commerce began to decline under the competition of Antwerp. Many English and foreign merchants in consequence left the declining city, to settle in that which was rapidly increasing in commerce and wealth. About the middle of the 16th century Antwerp was at the zenith of its power. It contained above a hundred thousand inhabitants, and was universally allowed to be the most illustrious mercantile city, and to carry

carry on the most extensive and richest commerce, of any in the north of Europe.

The rising greatness of Amsterdam was favoured by the unfortunate siege and capture of Antwerp by the duke of Parma; and the competition of the extraordinary industry and persevering exertions of the Hollanders not only prevented Antwerp from recovering her commerce, but gave a severe blow to the foreign trade of almost all the other Hanse Towns.

The subsequent decline of the trade of Amsterdam itself was caused partly by the low profits arising from home competition and abundance of capital; partly by excessive taxation, which raised the price of the necessaries of life; but more than either perhaps, by the progress of other nations possessing greater natural advantages, and being able, even with inferior skill, industry and capital, beneficially to carry on much of that trade which had before fallen almost exclusively into the hands of the Dutch.

As early as 1669 and 1670, when Sir William Temple was in Holland, the effects of abundance of capital and domestic competition

petition were such, that most of the foreign trades were losing ones, except the Indian, and that none of them gave a profit of more than two or three per cent^a. In such a state of things both the power and the will to save must be greatly diminished. The accumulation of capital must have been either stationary or declining, or at the best very slowly progressive. In fact, Sir William Temple gives it as his opinion that the trade of Holland had for some years passed its meridian, and begun sensibly to decay^b. Subsequently, when the progress of other nations was still more marked, it appeared from undoubted documents that most of the trades of Holland, as well as its fisheries, had decidedly fallen off, and that no branch of its commerce had retained its former vigour, except the American and African trades, and that of the Rhine and Maese, which are independent of foreign power and competition.

In 1669, the whole population of Holland and West Friesland was estimated by John de Witt at 2,400,000^c. In 1778, the

^a Temple's Works, vol. i. p. 69, fol. ^b Id. p. 67.

^c Interest of Holland, vol. i. p. 9.

population of the seven provinces was estimated only at 2,000,000^a; and thus, in the course of above a hundred years, the population, instead of increasing, as is usual, had greatly diminished.

In all these cases of commercial states, the progress of wealth and population seems to have been checked by one or more of the causes above mentioned, which must necessarily affect more or less the power of commanding the means of subsistence.

Universally it may be observed, that if, from any cause or causes whatever, the funds for the maintenance of labour in any country cease to be progressive, the effective demand for labour will also cease to be progressive; and wages will be reduced to that sum, which, under the existing prices of provisions, and the existing habits of the people, will just keep up, and no more than keep up, a stationary population. A state so circumstanced is under a moral impossibility of increasing, whatever may be the plenty of corn, or however high may be the profits

^a *Richesse de la Hollande*, vol. ii. p. 349.

of stock in other countries^a. It may indeed at a subsequent period, and under new circumstances, begin to increase again. If by some happy invention in mechanics, the discovery of some new channel of trade, or an unusual increase of agricultural wealth and population in the surrounding countries, its exports, of whatever kind, were to become unusually in demand, it might again import an increasing quantity of corn, and might again increase its population. But as long as it is unable to make yearly additions to its imports of food, it will evidently be unable to furnish the means of support to an increasing population ; and it will necessarily experience this inability, when, from the state of its commercial transactions, the funds for the maintenance of its labour become stationary, or begin to decline.

* It is a curious fact, that among the causes of the decline of the Dutch trade, Sir William Temple reckons the cheapness of corn, which, he says, "has been for these dozen years, or more, general in these parts of Europe." (vol. i. p. 69.) This cheapness, he says, impeded the vent of spices and other Indian commodities among the Baltic nations, by diminishing their power of purchasing.

CHAP. X.

Of Systems of Agriculture and Commerce combined.

IN a country the most exclusively confined to agriculture, some of its raw materials will always be worked up for domestic use. In the most commercial state, not absolutely confined to the walls of a town, some part of the food of its inhabitants, or of its cattle, will be drawn from the small territory in its neighbourhood. But, in speaking of systems of agriculture and commerce combined, something much further than this kind of combination is intended ; and it is meant to refer to countries, where the resources in land, and the capitals employed in commerce and manufactures, are both considerable, and neither preponderating greatly over the other.

A country so circumstanced possesses the advantages of both systems, while at the same time it is free from the peculiar evils

evils which belong to each, taken separately.

The prosperity of manufactures and commerce in any state implies at once that it has freed itself from the worst parts of the feudal system. It shews that the great body of the people are not in a state of servitude ; that they have both the power and the will to save ; that when capital accumulates it can find the means of secure employment, and consequently that the government is such as to afford the necessary protection to property. Under these circumstances, it is scarcely possible that it should ever experience that premature stagnation in the demand for labour, and the produce of the soil, which at times has marked the history of most of the nations of Europe. In a country in which manufactures and commerce flourish, the produce of the soil will always find a ready market at home; and such a market is peculiarly favourable to the progressive increase of capital. But the progressive increase of capital, and of the funds for the maintenance of labour, is the great cause of

of a demand for labour, and of high corn wages, while the high relative price of corn, occasioned by the improved machinery and extended capital employed in manufactures, together with the prosperity of foreign commerce, enables the labourer to exchange any given portion of his earnings in corn for a large proportion both of domestic and foreign conveniences and luxuries. Even when the effective demand for labour begins to slacken, and the corn wages to be reduced, still the high relative value of corn keeps up comparatively the condition of the labouring classes; and though their increase is checked, yet a very considerable body of them may still be well lodged and well cloathed, and able to indulge themselves in the conveniences and luxuries of foreign produce. Nor can they ever be reduced to the miserable condition of the poor in those countries, where, at the same time that the demand for labour is stationary, the value of corn, compared with manufactures and foreign commodities, is extremely low.

All the peculiar disadvantages therefore
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of a purely agricultural country are avoided by the growth and prosperity of manufactures and commerce.

In the same manner it will be found that the peculiar disadvantages attending states merely manufacturing and commercial will be avoided by the possession of resources in land.

A country which raises its own food cannot by any sort of foreign competition be reduced at once to a necessarily declining population. If the exports of a merely commercial country be essentially diminished by foreign competition, it may lose, in a very short time, its power of supporting the same number of people ; but if the exports of a country which has resources in land be diminished, it will merely lose some of its foreign conveniences and luxuries ; and the great and most important of all trades, the domestic trade carried on between the towns and the country, will remain comparatively undisturbed. It may indeed be checked in the rate of its progress for a time by the want of the same stimulus ; but there is no reason for its becoming retrograde ;

grade ; and there is no doubt that the capital thrown out of employment by the loss of foreign trade will not lie idle. It will find some channel in which it can be employed with advantage, though not with the same advantage as before ; and will be able to maintain an increasing population, though not increasing at the same rate as under the stimulus of a prosperous foreign trade.

The effects of home competition will in like manner be very different in the two states we are comparing.

In a state merely manufacturing and commercial, home competition and abundance of capital may so reduce the price of manufactured compared with raw produce, that the increased capital employed in manufactures may not procure in exchange an increased quantity of food. In a country where there are resources in land this cannot happen ; and though from improvements in machinery and the decreasing fertility of the new land taken into cultivation, a greater quantity of manufactures will be given for raw produce, yet the mass of manufactures can never fall in value,

owing to a competition of capital in this species of industry, unaccompanied by a correspondent competition of capital on land.

It should also be observed that in a state, the revenue of which consists solely in profits and wages, the diminution of profits and wages may greatly impair its disposable income. The increase in the amount of capital and in the number of labourers may in many cases not be sufficient to make up for the diminished rate of profits and wages. But where the revenue of the country consists of rents as well as profits and wages, a great part of what is lost in profits and wages is gained in rents, and the disposable income remains comparatively unimpaired.

Another eminent advantage possessed by a nation which is rich in land, as well as in commerce and manufactures, is, that the progress of its wealth and population is in a comparatively slight degree dependent upon the state and progress of other countries. A nation, whose wealth depends exclusively on manufactures and commerce, cannot increase without an increase in the raw products of the countries with which it trades;

or

or taking away a share of what they have been in the habit of actually consuming, which will rarely be parted with ; and thus the ignorance and indolence of others may not only be prejudicial, but fatal to its progress.

A country with resources in land can never be exposed to these inconveniences ; and if its industry, ingenuity and economy increase, its wealth and population will increase, whatever may be the situation and conduct of the nations with which it trades. When its manufacturing capital becomes redundant, and manufactured commodities are too cheap, it will have no occasion to wait for the increasing raw products of its neighbours. The transfer of its own redundant capital to its own land will raise fresh products, against which its manufactures may be exchanged, and by the double operation of diminishing comparatively the supply, and increasing the demand, enhance their price. A similar operation, when raw produce is too abundant, will restore the level between the profits of agriculture and manufactures. And upon

the same principle the stock of the country will be distributed through its various and distant provinces, according to the advantages presented by each situation for the employment, either of agricultural or manufacturing capital.

A country, in which in this manner agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, and all the different parts of a large territory, act and re-act upon each other in turn, might evidently go on increasing in riches and strength, although surrounded by Bishop Berkely's wall of brass. Such a country would naturally make the most of its foreign commerce, whatever might be the actual state of it; and its increase or decrease would be the addition or removal of a powerful stimulus to its own produce; but still the increase of this produce, to a very considerable extent, would be independent of foreign countries; and though it might be retarded by a failure of foreign commerce, it could not either be stopped or be made retrograde.

A fourth advantage derived from the union of agriculture and manufactures, particularly

particularly when they are nearly balanced, is that the capital and population of such a country can never be forced to make a retrograde movement, merely by the natural progress of other countries to that state of improvement to which they are all constantly tending.

According to all general principles, it will finally answer to most landed nations, both to manufacture for themselves, and to conduct their own commerce. That raw cottons should be shipped in America, carried some thousands of miles to another country, unshipped there, to be manufactured and shipped again for the American market, is a state of things which cannot be permanent. That it may last for some time, there can be no doubt; and I am very far from meaning to insinuate that an advantage, while it lasts, should not be used, merely because it will not continue for ever. But if the advantage be in its nature temporary, it is surely prudent to have this in view, and to use it in such a way, that when it ceases, it may not have been productive, on the whole, of more evil than good.

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If a country, owing to temporary advantages of this kind, should have its commerce and manufactures so greatly preponderate as to make it necessary to support a large portion of its people on foreign corn, it is certain that the progressive improvement of foreign countries in manufactures and commerce might, after a time, subject it to a period of poverty and of retrograde movements in capital and population, which might more than counterbalance the temporary benefits before enjoyed. While a nation in which the commercial and manufacturing population continued to be supported by its agriculture, might receive a very considerable stimulus to both, from such temporary advantages, without being exposed to any essential evil on their ceasing.

The countries which thus unite great landed resources with a prosperous state of commerce and manufactures, and in which the commercial part of the population never essentially exceeds the agricultural part, are eminently secure from sudden reverses. Their increasing wealth seems to
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be out of the reach of all common accidents ; and there is no reason to say that they might not go on increasing in riches and population for hundreds, nay almost thousands of years.

We must not however imagine that there is no limit to this progress though it is distant, and has certainly not been attained by any large landed nation yet known.

We have already seen that the limit to the population of commercial nations is the period when, from the actual state of foreign markets, they are unable regularly to import an increasing quantity of food. And the limit to the population of a nation which raises the whole of its food on its own territory is, when the land has been so fully occupied and worked, that the employment of another labourer on it will not on an average raise an additional quantity of food sufficient to support a family of such a size as will admit of an increase of population.

This is evidently the extreme practical limit to the progress of population, which no nation has ever yet reached, nor indeed ever will ; since no allowance has been here made

made either for other necessaries besides food, or for the profits of stock, both of which, however low, must always be something not inconsiderable.

Yet even this limit is very far short of what the earth is capable of producing, if all were employed upon it who were not employed in the production of other necessities ; that is, if soldiers, sailors, menial servants and all the artificers of luxuries, were made to labour upon the land. They would not indeed produce the support of a family, and ultimately not even of themselves ; but till the earth absolutely refused to yield any more, they would continue to add something to the common stock ; and by increasing the means of subsistence, would afford the means of supporting an increasing population. The whole people of a country might thus be employed during their whole time in the production of mere necessities, and no leisure be left for other pursuits of any kind. But this state of things could only be effected by the forced direction of the national industry into one channel by public authority. Upon
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the principle of private property, which it may be fairly presumed will always prevail in society, it could never happen. With a view to the individual interest either of a landlord or farmer, no labourer can ever be employed on the soil, who does not produce more than the value of his wages ; and if these wages be not on an average sufficient to maintain a wife, and rear two children to the age of marriage, it is evident that both the population and produce must come to a stand. Consequently, at the most extreme practical limit of population, the state of the land must be such as to enable the last employed labourers to produce the maintenance of as many, probably, as four persons.

And it is happy for mankind that such are the laws of nature. If the competition for the necessaries of life, in the progress of population, could reduce the whole human race to the necessity of incessant labour for them, man would be continually tending to a state of degradation ; and all the improvements which had marked the middle stages of his career would be completely

pletely lost at the end of it; but in reality, and according to the universal principle of private property, at the period when it will cease to answer to employ more labour upon the land, the excess of raw produce, not actually consumed by the cultivators, will, in the shape of rents, profits, and wages, particularly the first, bear nearly as great a proportion to the whole as at any previous period, and, at all events, sufficient to support a large part of the society living either without manual labour, or employing themselves in modifying the raw materials of the land into the forms best suited to the gratification of man.

When we refer therefore to the practical limits of population, it is of great importance to recollect that they must be always very far short of the utmost power of the earth to produce food.

It is also of great importance to recollect that long before this practical limit is attained in any country the rate of the increase of population will gradually diminish. When the capital of a country becomes stationary from bad government, indolence, extravagance,

extravagance, or a sudden shock to commerce, it is just possible that the check to population may in some degree be sudden, though in that case it cannot take place without a considerable convulsion. But when the capital of a country comes to a stop from the continued progress of accumulation and the exhaustion of the cultivable land, both the profits of stock and the wages of labour must have been gradually diminishing for a long period, till they are both ultimately so low as to afford no further encouragement to an increase of stock, and no further means for the support of an increasing population. If we could suppose that the capital employed upon the land was at all times as great as could possibly be applied with the same profit, and there were no agricultural improvements to save labour, it is obvious that, as accumulation proceeded, profits and wages would regularly fall, and the diminished rate in the progress of population would be quite regular. But practically this can never happen ; and various causes, both natural and artificial, will concur to prevent this regularity,

gularity, and occasion great variations at different times in the rate at which the population proceeds towards its final limit.

In the first place, land is practically almost always understocked with capital. This arises partly, from the usual tenures on which farms are held, which, by discouraging the transfer of capital from commerce and manufactures, leaves it principally to be generated on the land ; and partly, from the very nature of much of the soil of almost all large countries, which is such that the employment of a small capital upon it may be little productive, while the employment of a large capital in draining, or in changing the character of the soil by a sufficient quantity of natural and artificial manures, may be productive in a high degree; and partly also, from the circumstance that after every fall of profits and wages there will often be room for the employment of a much greater capital upon the land than is at the command of those, who, by being in the actual occupation of farms, can alone so employ it.

Secondly ; improvements in agriculture.

If

If new and superior modes of cultivation be invented, by which not only the land is better managed, but is worked with less labour, it is obvious that inferior land may be cultivated at higher profits than could be obtained from richer land before ; and an improved system of culture, with the use of better instruments, may for a long period more than counterbalance the tendency of an extended cultivation and a great increase of capital to yield smaller proportionate returns.

Thirdly ; improvements in manufactures. When by increased skill and the invention of improved machinery in manufactures one man becomes capable of doing as much as eight or ten could before, it is well known that, from the principle of home competition and the consequent great increase of quantity, the prices of such manufactures will greatly fall ; and, as far as they include the necessities and accustomed conveniences of labourers and farmers, they must tend to diminish that portion of the value of the whole produce which is consumed necessarily on the land, and leave a larger remainder.

mainder. From this larger remainder may be drawn a higher rate of profits, notwithstanding the increase of capital and extension of cultivation.

Fourthly; the prosperity of foreign commerce. If from a prosperous foreign commerce our labour and domestic commodities rise considerably in price, while foreign commodities are advanced comparatively very little, an event which is very common, it is evident that the farmer or labourer will be able to obtain the tea, sugar, cottons, linens, leather, tallow, timber, &c., which he stands in need of, for a smaller quantity of corn or labour than before ; and this increased power of purchasing foreign commodities will have precisely the same effect, in allowing the means of an extended cultivation without a fall of profits, as the improvements in manufactures just referred to.

Fifthly; a temporary increase in the relative price of raw produce from increased demand. Allowing, what is certainly not true, that a rise in the price of raw produce, will after a certain number of years,

years, occasion a proportionate rise in labour^a and other commodities, yet, during the time that the price of raw produce takes the lead, it is obvious that the profits of cultivation may increase under an extended agriculture, and a continued accumulation of capital. And these intervals, it should be observed, must be of infinite importance in the progress of the wealth of a landed nation, particularly with reference to the causes of deficient capital upon the land before mentioned. If the land for the most part generates the new capital which is employed in extending its cultivation ; and if the employment of a considerable capital for a certain period will often put land in such a state, that it can be cultivated afterwards at comparatively little expense; a period of high agricultural profits, though it may last only

* A rise, which is occasioned exclusively by the increased quantity of labour which may be required in the progress of society to raise a given quantity of corn on the last land taken into cultivation, must of course be peculiar to raw produce, and will not be communicated to those commodities, in the production of which there is no increase of labour.

eight or ten years, may often be the means of giving to a country what is equivalent to a fresh quantity of land.

Though it is unquestionably and necessarily true, therefore, that the *tendency* of a continually increasing capital and extending cultivation is to occasion a progressive fall both of profits and wages ; yet the causes above enumerated are evidently sufficient to account for great and long irregularities in this progress.

We see in consequence, in all the states of Europe, great variations at different periods in the progress of their capital and population. After slumbering for years in a state almost stationary, some countries have made a sudden start, and have begun increasing at a rate almost approaching to new colonies. Russia and parts of Prussia have afforded instances of this kind, and have continued this rate of progress after the accumulation of capital and the extension of cultivation had been proceeding with great rapidity for many years.

From the operation of the same causes

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we have seen similar variations in our own country. About the middle of last century the interest of money was at 3 per cent.; and we may conclude that the profits of stock were nearly in proportion. At that time, as far as can be collected from the births and marriages, the population was increasing but slowly. From 1720 to 1750, a period of 30 years, the increase is calculated to have been only about 900,000 on a population of 5,565,000^a. Since this period it cannot be doubted that the capital of the country has been prodigiously enlarged, and its cultivation very greatly extended; yet, during the last twenty years, we have seen the interest of money at above 5 per cent., with profits in proportion; and, from 1800 to 1811, an increase of population equal to 1,200,000 on 9,287,000, a rate of increase about two and a half times as great as at the former period.

But, notwithstanding these causes of irregularity in the progress of capital and population, it is quite certain that they can-

^a Population Abstracts, Preliminary Observations, table, p. xxv.

not reach their necessary practical limit but by a very gradual process. Before the accumulation of capital comes to a stop from *necessity*, the profits of stock must for a long time have been so low as to afford scarcely any encouragement to an excess of saving above expenditure; and before the progress of population is finally stopped, the real wages of labour must have been gradually diminishing, till, under the existing habits of the people, they could only support such families as would just keep up, and no more than keep up, the actual population.

It appears then, that it is the union of the agricultural and commercial systems, and not either of them taken separately, that is calculated to produce the greatest national prosperity; that a country with an extensive and rich territory, the cultivation of which is stimulated by improvements in agriculture, manufactures and foreign commerce, has such various and abundant resources, that it is extremely difficult to say when they will reach their limits. That there is, however, a limit which, if the capital and population of a country

country continue increasing, they must ultimately reach, and cannot pass; and that this limit, upon the principle of private property, must be far short of the utmost power of the earth to produce food.

CHAP. XI.

Of Corn-Laws. Bounties upon Exportation.

IT has been observed that some countries, with great resources in land, and an evident power of supporting a greatly increased population from their own soil, have yet been in the habit of importing large quantities of foreign corn, and have become dependent upon other states for a great part of their supplies.

The causes which may lead to this state of things seem to be chiefly the following :

First; any obstacles which the laws, constitutions and customs of a country present to the accumulation of capital on the land, which do not apply with equal force to the increasing employment of capital in commerce and manufactures.

In every state in which the feudal system has prevailed, there are laws and customs of this kind, which prevent the free division and alienation of land like other property,

perty, and render the preparations for an extension of cultivation often both very difficult and very expensive. Improvements in such countries are chiefly carried on by tenants, a large part of whom have no leases, or at least leases of any length; and though their wealth and respectability have of late years very greatly increased, yet it is not possible to put them on a footing with enterprising owners, and to give them the same independence, and the same encouragement to employ their capitals with spirit, as merchants and manufacturers.

Secondly; a system of direct or indirect taxation, of such a nature as to throw a weight upon the agriculture of a country, which is either unequal, or, from peculiar circumstances, can be better borne by commerce and manufactures.

It is universally allowed that a direct tax on corn grown at home, if not counterbalanced by a corresponding tax on the importation of it, might be such as to destroy at once the cultivation of grain, and make a country import the whole of its consumption; and a partial effect of the same

same kind would follow, if, by a system of indirect taxation, the general price of labour were raised and yet by means of drawbacks on home and foreign commodities, by an abundance of colonial produce, and by those peculiar articles^a, the demand for which abroad would not be much affected by the increase of price, the value of the whole of the exports, though not the quantity, might admit of increase.

Thirdly; improved machinery, combined with extensive capital and a very advantageous division of labour.

If in any country, by means of capital and machinery, one man be enabled to do the work of ten, it is quite obvious that before the same advantages are extended to other countries, a rise in the price of labour will but very little interfere with the power of selling those sorts of commodities, in the production of which the capital and machinery are so effectively applied. It is quite true that an advance in the necessary wages of labour, which increases the ex-

^aA rise in the price of labour in China would certainly increase the returns which it receives for its teas.

pense of raising corn, may have the same effect upon many commodities besides corn; and if there were no others, no encouragement would be given to the importation of foreign grain, as there might be no means by which it could be purchased cheaper abroad. But a large class of the exportable commodities of a commercial country are of a different description. They are either articles in a considerable degree peculiar to the country and its dependencies, or such as have been produced by superior capital and machinery, the prices of which are determined rather by domestic than foreign competition. All commodities of this kind will evidently be able to support without essential injury an advance in the price of labour, some permanently, and others for a considerable time. The rise in the price of the commodity so occasioned, or rather the prevention of that fall which would otherwise have taken place, may always indeed have the effect of decreasing in some degree the *quantity* of the commodity exported; but it by no means follows that it will diminish the whole of its bullion value in the foreign country, which is precisely

precisely what determines the bullion value, and generally the quantity of the returns. If cottons in this country were now to fall to half their present price, we should undoubtedly export a greater quantity than we do at present; but I very much doubt whether we should export double the quantity, and yet we must do this to enable us to command as much foreign produce as before. In this case, as in numerous others of the same kind, quantity and value go together to a certain point, though not at an equal pace; but, beyond this point, a further increase of quantity only diminishes the whole value produced, and the amount of the returns that can be obtained for it.

It is obvious then that a country, notwithstanding a high comparative price of labour and of materials, may easily stand a competition with foreigners in those commodities to which it can apply a superior capital and machinery with great effect; although such a price of labour and materials might give an undisputed advantage to foreigners in agriculture and some other sorts of produce, where the same saving of labour

labour cannot take place. Consequently such a country may find it cheaper to purchase a considerable part of its supplies of grain from abroad with its manufactures and peculiar products, than to grow the whole at home.

If, from all or any of these causes, a nation becomes habitually dependent on foreign countries for the support of a considerable portion of its population; it must evidently be subjected, while such dependence lasts, to some of those evils which belong to a nation purely manufacturing and commercial. In one respect, indeed, it will still continue to have a great superiority. It will possess resources in land, which may be resorted to when its manufactures and commerce, either from foreign competition, or any other causes, begin to fail. But, to balance this advantage, it will be subjected, during the time that large importations are necessary, to much greater fluctuations in its supplies of corn, than countries wholly manufacturing and commercial. The demands of Holland and Hamburg may be known with considerable accuracy

accuracy by the merchants who supply them. If they increase, they increase gradually; and, not being subject from year to year to any great and sudden variations, it might be safe and practicable to make regular contracts for the average quantity wanted. But it is otherwise with such countries as England and Spain. Their wants are necessarily very variable, from the variableness of the seasons; and if the merchants were to contract with exporting countries for the quantity required in average years, two or three abundant seasons might ruin them. They must necessarily wait to see the state of the crops in each year, in order safely to regulate their proceedings; and though it is certainly true that it is only the deficiency from the average crop, and not the whole deficiency, which may be considered altogether in the light of a new demand in Europe; yet the largeness and previous uncertainty of this whole deficiency, the danger of making contracts for a stated quantity annually, and the greater chance of hostile combinations against large and warlike states, must greatly aggravate the

the difficulties of procuring a steady supply; and if it be true that unfavourable seasons are not unfrequently general, it is impossible to conceive that they should not occasionally be subject to great variations of price.

It has been sometimes stated that scarcities are partial, not general, and that a deficiency in one country is always compensated by a plentiful supply in others. But this seems to be quite an unfounded supposition. In the evidence brought before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1814, relating to the corn-laws, one of the corn merchants being asked whether it frequently happened that crops in the countries bordering upon the Baltic failed, when they failed here, replied, “ When crops are unfavourable in one part of Europe, it generally happens that they are more or less so in another.” If any person will take the trouble to examine the contemporaneous prices of corn in the different countries of Europe for some length of time, he will be convinced that the answer

* Report, p. 93.

here given is perfectly just. In the last hundred and fifty years, above twenty will be found in which the rise of prices is common to France and England, although there was seldom much intercourse between them in the trade of corn: and Spain and the Baltic nations, as far as their prices have been collected, appear frequently to have shared in the same general deficiency. Even within the last five years, two have occurred, the years 1811-12, and 1816-17, in which, with extraordinary high prices in this country, the imports have been comparatively inconsiderable; which can only have arisen from those scarcities having been general over the greatest part of Europe.

Under these circumstances let us suppose that two million quarters of foreign grain were the average quantity annually wanted in this country, and suppose, at the same time, that a million quarters were deficient from a bad season; the whole deficiency to be supplied would then be three millions.

If the scarcity were general in Europe, it may fairly be concluded, that some states would prohibit the export of their corn entirely.

entirely, and others tax it very highly; and if we could obtain a million or fifteen hundred thousand quarters, it is probably as much as we could reasonably expect. We should then, however, be two millions or fifteen hundred thousand quarters deficient. On the other hand, if we had habitually grown our own consumption, and were deficient a million of quarters from a bad season, it is scarcely probable that, notwithstanding a general scarcity, we should not be able to obtain three or four hundred thousand quarters in consequence of our advanced prices; particularly if the usual prices of our corn and labour were higher than in the rest of Europe. And in this case the sum of our whole deficiency would only be six or seven hundred thousand quarters, instead of fifteen hundred thousand or two millions of quarters. If the present year (1816-17) had found us in a state in which our growth of corn had been habitually far short of our consumption, the distresses of the country would have been dreadfully aggravated.

To provide against accidents of this kind, and to secure a more abundant and, at the time,

time, a more steady supply of grain, a system of corn-laws has been recommended the object of which is to discourage by duties or prohibitions the importation of foreign corn, and encourage by bounties the exportation of corn of home growth.

A system of this kind was completed in our own country in 1688^a, the policy of which has been treated of at some length by Adam Smith.

In whatever way the general question may be finally decided, it must be allowed by all those who acknowledge the efficacy of the great principle of supply and demand that the line of argument taken by the author of the *Wealth of Nations* against the system is essentially erroneous.

He first states that, whatever extension of the foreign market can be occasioned by the bounty, must in every particular year be altogether at the expense of the home

^a Though the object here stated may not have been the specific object of the law of 1688, it is certainly the object for which the system has been subsequently recommended.

market, as every bushel of corn which is exported by means of the bounty, and which would not have been exported without the bounty, would have remained in the home market to increase the consumption, and to lower the price of that commodity *.

In this observation he evidently misapplies the term market. Because, by selling a commodity lower, it is easy to get rid of a greater quantity of it, in any particular market, than would have gone off otherwise, it cannot justly be said that by this process such a market is proportionally extended. Though the removal of the two taxes mentioned by Adam Smith as paid on account of the bounty would certainly increase the power of the lower classes to purchase, yet in each particular year the consumption must ultimately be limited by the population, and the increase of consumption from the removal of these taxes would by no means be sufficient to give the same encouragement to cultivation as the addition of the foreign demand. If

* Vol. ii. b. iv. c. 5.

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the price of British corn in the home market rise in consequence of the bounty, before the price of production is increased (and an immediate rise is distinctly acknowledged by Adam Smith), it is an unanswerable proof that the effectual demand for British corn is extended by it; and that the diminution of demand at home, whatever it may be, is more than counterbalanced by the extension of demand abroad.

Adam Smith goes on to say that the two taxes paid by the people on account of the bounty, namely, the one to the government to pay this bounty, and the other paid in the advanced price of the commodity, must either reduce the subsistence of the labouring poor, or occasion an augmentation in their pecuniary wages proportioned to that in the pecuniary price of their subsistence. So far as it operates in the one way it must reduce the ability of the labouring poor to educate and bring up their children, and must so far tend to restrain the population of the country. So far as it operates in the other, it must reduce the ability of the employers of the poor to employ

employ so great a number as they otherwise might do, and must so far tend to restrain the industry of the country.

It will be readily allowed that the tax occasioned by the bounty will have the one or the other of the effects here contemplated; but it cannot be allowed that it will have both. Yet it is observed, that though the tax, which that institution imposes upon the whole body of the people, be very burdensome to those who pay it, it is of very little advantage to those who receive it. This is surely a contradiction. If the price of labour rise in proportion to the price of wheat, as is subsequently asserted, how is the labourer rendered less competent to support a family? If the price of labour do not rise in proportion to the price of wheat, how is it possible to maintain that the landlords and farmers are not able to employ more labourers on their land? Yet in this contradiction the author of the *Wealth of Nations* has had respectable followers; and some of those who have agreed with him in his opinion that corn regulates the prices of labour, and of all

other commodities, still insist on the injury done to the labouring classes of society by a rise in the price of corn, and the benefit they would derive from a fall.

The main argument however which Adam Smith adduces against the bounty is, that as the money price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities, the advantage to the proprietor from the increase of money price is merely apparent, and not real ; since what he gains in his sales he must lose in his purchases.

This position, though true to a certain extent, is by no means true to the extent of preventing the movement of capital to or from the land, which is the precise point in question. The money price of corn in a particular country is undoubtedly by far the most powerful ingredient in regulating the price of labour, and of all other commodities ; but it is not enough for Adam Smith's position that it should be the most powerful ingredient ; it must be shewn that, other causes remaining the same, the price of every article will rise and fall exactly in proportion to the price of corn, and this is
very

very far from being the case. Adam Smith himself excepts all foreign commodities; but when we reflect upon the vast amount of our imports, and the quantity of foreign articles used in our manufactures, this exception alone is of the greatest importance. Wool and raw hides, two most important materials of home growth, do not, according to Adam Smith's own reasonings, (Book I. c. xi. p. 363, et seq.) depend much upon the price of corn and the rent of land; and the prices of flax, tallow, and leather, are of course greatly influenced by the quantity we import. But woollen cloths, cotton and linen goods, leather, soap, candles, tea, sugar &c., which are comprehended in the above-named articles, form almost the whole of the clothing and luxuries of the industrious classes of society.

It should be further observed that in all countries, the industry of which is greatly assisted by fixed capital, the part of the price of the wrought commodity which pays the profits of such capital will not necessarily rise in consequence of an advance in the price of corn, except as it re-

quires gradual renovation ; and the advantage derived from machinery which has been constructed before the advance in the price of labour will naturally last for some years.

In the case also of great and numerous taxes on consumption, a rise or fall in the price of corn, though it would increase or decrease that part of the wages of labour which resolves itself into food, evidently would not increase or decrease that part which is destined for the payment of taxes.

It cannot then be admitted as a general position that the money price of corn in any country is a just measure of the real value of silver in that country. But all these considerations, though of great weight to the owners of land, will not influence the farmers beyond the present leases. At the expiration of a lease, any particular advantage which a farmer had received from a favourable proportion between the price of corn and of labour would be taken from him, and any disadvantage from an unfavourable proportion be made up to him. The sole cause which would deter-

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mine the proportion of capital employed in agriculture, would be the extent of the effectual demand for corn; and if the bounty had really enlarged this demand, which it certainly would have done, it is impossible to suppose that more capital would not be employed upon the land.

When Adam Smith says that the nature of things has stamped upon corn a real value, which cannot be altered by merely altering the money price, and that no bounty upon exportation, no monopoly of the home market, can raise that value, nor the freest competition lower it, it is obvious that he changes the question from the profits of the growers of corn, or of the proprietors of the land, to the physical and absolute value of corn itself. I certainly do not mean to say that the bounty alters the physical value of corn, and makes a bushel of it support equally well a greater number of labourers than it did before; but I certainly do mean to say that the bounty to the British cultivator does, in the actual state of things, really increase the demand for British corn, and thus encourage

rage him to sow more than he otherwise would do, and enables him in consequence to employ more bushels of corn in the maintenance of a greater number of labourers.

If Adam Smith's theory were true, and the real price of corn were unchangeable, or not capable of experiencing a relative increase or decrease of value compared with labour and other commodities, agriculture would indeed be in an unfortunate situation. It would be at once excluded from the operation of that principle so beautifully explained in the *Wealth of Nations*, by which capital flows from one employment to another, according to the various and necessarily fluctuating wants of society. But surely we cannot doubt that the real price of corn varies, though it may not vary so much as the real price of other commodities ; and that there are periods when all wrought commodities are cheaper, and periods when they are dearer, in proportion to the price of corn ; and in the one case capital flows from manufactures to agriculture, and in the other from agriculture

culture to manufactures. To overlook these periods, or consider them of slight importance, is not allowable ; because in every branch of trade these periods form the grand encouragement to an increase of supply. Undoubtedly the profits of trade in any particular branch of industry can never long remain higher than in others ; but how are they lowered except by the influx of capital occasioned by these high profits ? It never can be a national object permanently to increase the profits of any particular set of dealers. The national object is the increase of supply ; but this object cannot be attained except by previously increasing the profits of these dealers, and thus determining a greater quantity of capital to this particular employment. The ship-owners and sailors of Great Britain do not make greater profits now than they did before the Navigation Act ; but the object of the nation was not to increase the profits of ship-owners and sailors, but the quantity of shipping and seamen ; and this could not be done but by a law, which, by increasing the demand for them, raised the profits

profits of the capital before employed in this way, and determined a greater quantity to flow into the same channel. The object of a nation in the establishment of a bounty is, not to increase the profits of the farmers or the rents of the landlords, but to determine a greater quantity of the national capital to the land, and consequently to increase supply ; and though, in the case of an advance in the price of corn from an increased demand, the rise of wages, the rise of rents and the fall of silver tend, in some degree, to obscure our view of the subject ; yet we cannot refuse to acknowledge that the real price of corn varies during periods sufficiently long to affect the determination of capital, or we shall be reduced to the dilemma of owning that no possible degree of demand can encourage the growth of corn.

It must be allowed then that the peculiar argument relating to the nature of corn brought forward by Adam Smith upon this occasion cannot be maintained ; and that a bounty upon the exportation of corn must enlarge the demand for it and encourage its

its production in the same manner, if not in the same degree, as a bounty upon the exportation of any other commodity.

But it has been urged further that this increased production of corn must necessarily occasion permanent cheapness; and a period of considerable length, during the first 64 years of the last century, while a bounty was in full operation in this country, has been advanced as a proof of it. In this conclusion, however, it may be reasonably suspected that an effect, in its nature temporary, though it may be of some duration, has been mistaken for one which is necessarily permanent.

According to the theory of demand and supply, the bounty might be expected to operate in the following manner :

It is frequently stated in the *Wealth of Nations* that a great demand is followed by a great supply; a great scarcity by a great plenty; an unusual dearth by an unusual cheapness. A great and indefinite demand is indeed generally found to produce a supply more than proportioned to it. This supply as naturally occasions unusual cheapness;

cheapness ; but this cheapness, when it comes, must in its turn check the production of the commodity ; and this check, upon the same principle, is apt to continue longer than necessary, and again to occasion a return to high prices.

This appears to be the manner in which a bounty upon the exportation of corn, if granted under circumstances favourable to its efficiency, might be expected to operate, and this seems to have been the manner in which it really did operate in the only instance where it has been fairly tried.

Without meaning to deny the concurrence of other causes, or attempting to estimate the relative efficiency of the bounty, it is impossible not to acknowledge that when the growing price of corn was, according to Adam Smith, only 28 shillings a quarter, and the corn-markets of England were as low as those of the continent, a premium of five shillings a quarter upon exportation must have occasioned an increase of real price, and given encouragement to the cultivation of grain. But the changes produced in the direction of capital to or from

from the land will always be slow. Those who have been in the habit of employing their stock in mercantile concerns do not readily turn it into the channel of agriculture ; and it is a still more difficult and slower operation to withdraw capital from the soil, to employ it in commerce. For the first 25 years after the establishment of the bounty in this country the price of corn rose 2 or 3 shillings in the quarter ; but owing probably to the wars of William and Anne, to bad seasons, and a scarcity of money, capital seems to have accumulated slowly on the land, and no great surplus growth was effected. It was not till after the peace of Utrecht that the capital of the country began in a marked manner to increase ; and it is impossible that the bounty should not gradually have directed a larger portion of this accumulation to the land than would otherwise have gone to it. A surplus growth, and a fall of price for thirty or forty years, followed.

It will be said that this period of low prices was too long to be occasioned by a bounty, even according to the theory just

just laid down. This is perhaps true, and in all probability the period would have been shorter if the bounty alone had operated ; but in this case other causes powerfully combined with it.

The fall in the price of British corn was accompanied by a fall of prices on the continent. Whatever were the general causes which produced this effect in foreign countries, it is probable that they were not wholly inoperative in England. At all events nothing could be so powerfully calculated to produce cheapness, and to occasion a slow return to high prices, as a considerable surplus growth, which was unwillingly received, and only at low prices, by other nations. When such a surplus growth had been obtained, some time would necessarily be required to destroy it by cheapness, particularly as the moral stimulus of the bounty would probably continue to act long after the fall of prices had commenced. If to these causes we add that a marked fall in the rate of interest, about the same time, evinced an abundance of capital, and a consequent difficulty

difficulty of finding a profitable employment for it; and consider further the natural obstacles to the moving of capital from the land; we shall see sufficient reason why even a long period might elapse without any essential alteration in the comparative abundance and cheapness of corn.

Adam Smith attributes this cheapness to a rise in the value of silver. The fall in the price of corn which took place in France and some other countries about the same time might give some countenance to the conjecture. But the accounts we have lately had of the produce of the mines during the period in question does not sufficiently support it; and it is much more probable that it arose from the comparative state of peace in which Europe was placed after the termination of the wars of Louis XIV., which facilitated the accumulation of capital on the land, and encouraged agricultural improvements.

With regard to this country, indeed, it is observed by Adam Smith himself, that labour and other articles were rising; a fact very unfavourable to the supposition of an increased

increased value of the precious metals. Not only the money price of corn fell, but its value relative to other articles was lowered, and this fall of relative value, together with great exportations, clearly pointed to a relative abundance of corn, in whatever way it might be occasioned, as the main cause of the facts observed, rather than a scarcity of silver. This great fall in the British corn-market, particularly during the ten years from 1740 to 1750, accompanied by a great fall in the continental markets, owing in some degree perhaps to the great exportations of British corn, especially during the years 1748, 1749, and 1750, must necessarily have given some check to its cultivation, while the increase of the real price of labour must at the same time have given a stimulus to the increase of population. The united operation of these two causes is exactly calculated first to diminish and ultimately to destroy a surplus of corn ; and as, after 1764, the wealth and manufacturing population of Great Britain increased more rapidly than those of her neighbours,

neighbours, the returning stimulus to agriculture, considerable as it was, arising almost exclusively from a home demand, was incapable of producing a surplus ; and not being confined as before to British cultivation, owing to the alteration in the corn-laws, was inadequate even to effect an independent supply. Had the old corn-laws remained in full force, we should still probably have lost our surplus growth, owing to the causes above mentioned, although from their restrictive clauses we should certainly have been nearer the growth of an independent supply immediately previous to the scarcity of 1800.

It is not therefore necessary, in order to object to the bounty, to say with Adam Smith that the fall in the price of corn which took place during the first half of the last century must have happened in spite of the bounty, and could not possibly have happened in consequence of it. We may allow, on the contrary, what I think we ought to allow according to all general principles, that the bounty, when granted under favourable circumstances, is really calculated,

calculated, after going through a period of dearness, to produce the surplus and the cheapness which its advocates promise^a; but according to the same general principles we must allow that this surplus and cheapness, from their operating at once as a check to produce and an encouragement to population, cannot be for any great length of time maintained.

The objection then to a bounty on corn, independently of the objections to bounties in general, is, that when imposed under the most favourable circumstances it cannot produce permanent cheapness : and if it be imposed under unfavourable circumstances ; that is, if an attempt be made to force exportation by an adequate bounty at a time when the country does not fully grow its own consumption ; it is obvious not only that the

^a As far as the bounty might tend to force the cultivation of poorer land, so far no doubt it would have a tendency to raise the price of corn ; but we know from experience that the rise of price naturally occasioned in this way is continually counteracted by improvements in agriculture. As a matter of fact it must be allowed, that, during the period of the last century when corn was falling, more land must have been taken into cultivation.

tax necessary for the purpose must be a very heavy one, but that the effect will be absolutely prejudicial to the population, and the surplus growth will be purchased by a sacrifice very far beyond its worth.

But notwithstanding the strong objections to bounties on general grounds, and their inapplicability in cases which are not unfrequent, it must be acknowledged that while they are operative ; that is, while they produce an exportation which would not otherwise have taken place, they unquestionably encourage an increased growth of corn in the countries in which they are established, or maintain it at a point to which it would not otherwise have attained.

Under peculiar and favourable circumstances a country might maintain a considerable surplus growth for a great length of time, with an inconsiderable increase of the growing price of corn ; and perhaps little or no increase of the average price, including years of scarcity ^a. If from any period during

^a The average price is different from the growing price. Years of scarcity, which must occasionally occur, essentially affect the average price ; and the growth of a surplus quantity of corn, which tends to prevent scarcity, will tend to lower this average, and make it approach nearer to the growing price.

the last century, when an average excess of growth for exportation had been obtained by the stimulus of a bounty, the foreign demand for our corn had increased at the same rate as the domestic demand, our surplus growth might have become permanent. After the bounty had ceased to stimulate to fresh exertions, its influence would by no means be lost. For some years it would have given the British grower an absolute advantage over the foreign grower. This advantage would of course gradually diminish; because it is the nature of all effectual demand to be ultimately supplied, and oblige the producers to sell at the lowest price they can afford consistently with the general rate of profits. But, after having experienced a period of decided encouragement, the British grower would find himself in the habit of supplying a larger market than his own upon equal terms with his competitors. And if the foreign and British markets continued to extend themselves equally, he would continue to proportion his supplies to both; because, unless a particular increase

crease of demand were to take place at home, he could never withdraw his foreign supply without lowering the price of his whole crop ; and the nation would thus be in possession of a constant store for years of scarcity.

But even supposing that by a bounty, combined with the most favourable state of prices in other countries, a particular state could maintain permanently an average excess of growth for exportation, it must not of course be imagined that its population would not still be checked by the difficulty of procuring subsistence. It would indeed be less exposed to the particular pressure arising from years of scarcity ; but in other respects it would be subject to the same checks as those already described in the preceding chapters ; and whether there was an habitual exportation or not, the population would be regulated by the real wages of labour, and would come to a stand when the necessaries which these wages could command were not sufficient, under the actual habits of the people, to encourage an increase of numbers.

CHAP. XII.

Of Corn-Laws. Restrictions upon Importation.

THE laws which prohibit the importation of foreign grain, though by no means unobjectionable, are not open to the same objections as bounties, and must be allowed to be adequate to the object they have in view,—the maintenance of an independent supply. A country, with landed resources, which determines never to import corn but when the price indicates an approach towards a scarcity, will necessarily, in average years, supply its own wants. Though we may reasonably therefore object to restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn, on the grounds of their tending to prevent the most profitable employment of the national capital and industry, to check population, and to discourage the export of our manufactures; yet we cannot deny their tendency to encourage the growth of corn at

at home, and to procure and maintain an independent supply. A bounty, it has appeared, sufficient to make it answer its purpose in forcing a surplus growth, would, in many cases, require so very heavy a direct tax, and would bear so large a proportion to the whole price of the corn, as to make it in some countries next to impracticable. Restrictions upon importation impose no direct tax upon the people. On the contrary, they might be made, if it were thought adviseable, sources of revenue to the government, and they can always, without difficulty, be put in execution, and be made infallibly to answer their express purpose of securing, in average years, a sufficient growth of corn for the actual population.

We have considered, in the preceding chapters, the peculiar disadvantages which attend a system either almost exclusively agricultural or exclusively commercial, and the peculiar advantages which attend a system in which they are united, and flourish together. It has further appeared that, in a country with great landed resources,

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the commercial population may, from particular causes, so far predominate, as to subject it to some of the evils which belong to a state purely commercial and manufacturing, and to a degree of fluctuation in the price of corn greater than is found to take place in such a state. It is obviously possible, by restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn, to maintain a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes. The question is not a question of the efficiency or inefficiency of the measure proposed, but of its policy or impolicy. The object can certainly be accomplished, but it may be purchased too dear ; and to those who do not at once reject all inquiries on points of this kind, as impeaching a principle which they hold sacred, the question, whether a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes of society, which would not take place naturally, ought, under certain circumstances, to be maintained artificially, must appear to be the most important practical question in the whole compass of political economy.

One of the objections to the admission of
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the doctrine that restrictions upon importation are advantageous is, that it cannot possibly be laid down as a general rule that every state ought to raise its own corn. There are some states so circumstanced that the rule is clearly and obviously inapplicable to them.

In the first place there are many states which have made some figure in history, the territories of which have been perfectly inconsiderable compared with their main town or towns, and utterly incompetent to supply the actual population with food. In such communities, what is called the principal internal trade of a large state, the trade which is carried on between the towns and the country, must necessarily be a foreign trade, and the importation of foreign corn is absolutely necessary to their existence. They may be said to be born without the advantage of land, and, to whatever risks and disadvantages a system merely commercial and manufacturing may be exposed, they have no power of choosing any other. All that they can do is to make the most of their own situation, compared with

with the situation of their neighbours, and to endeavour by superior industry, skill, and capital, to make up for so important a deficiency. In these efforts some states of which we have accounts have been wonderfully successful ; but the reverses to which they have been subject have been almost as conspicuous as the degree of their prosperity compared with the scantiness of their natural resources.

Secondly, restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn are evidently not applicable to a country which, from its soil and climate, is subject to very great and sudden variations in its home supplies, from the variations of the seasons. A country so circumstanced will unquestionably increase its chance of a steady supply of grain by opening as many markets for importation and exportation as possible, and this will probably be true, even though other countries occasionally prohibit or tax the exports of their grain. The peculiar evil to which such a country is subject can only be mitigated by encouraging the freest possible foreign trade in corn.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, restrictions upon importation are not applicable to a country which has a very barren territory, although it may be of some extent. An attempt fully to cultivate and improve such a territory by forcibly directing capital to it would probably, under any circumstances, fail; and the actual produce obtained in this way might be purchased by sacrifices which the capital and industry of the nation could not possibly continue to support. Whatever advantages those countries may enjoy, which possess the means of supporting a considerable population from their own soil, such advantages are not within the reach of a state so circumstanced. It must either consent to be a poor and inconsiderable community, or it must place its chief dependence on other resources than those of land. It resembles in many respects those states which have a very small territory; and its policy, with regard to the importation of corn, must of course be nearly the same.

In all these cases there can be no doubt of the impolicy of attempting to maintain a balance

a balance between the agricultural and commercial classes of society which would not take place naturally.

Under other and opposite circumstances, however, this impolicy is by no means so clear.

If a nation possesses a large territory consisting of land of an average quality, it may without difficulty support from its own soil a population fully sufficient to maintain its rank in wealth and power among the countries with which it has relations either of commerce or of war. Territories of a certain extent must ultimately in the main support their own population. As each exporting country approaches towards that complement of wealth and population to which it is naturally tending, it will gradually withdraw the corn which for a time it had spared to its more manufacturing and commercial neighbours, and leave them to subsist on their own resources. The peculiar products of each soil and climate are objects of foreign trade, which can never, under any circumstances, fail. But food is not a peculiar product ; and

and the country which produces it in the greatest abundance may, according to the laws which govern the progress of population, have nothing to spare for others. An extensive foreign trade in corn beyond what arises from the variableness of the seasons in different countries is rather a temporary and incidental trade, depending chiefly upon the different stages of improvement which different countries may have reached, and on other accidental circumstances, than a trade which is in its nature permanent, and the stimulus to which will remain in the progress of society unabated. In the wildness of speculation it has been suggested (of course more in jest than in earnest), that Europe ought to grow its corn in America, and devote itself solely to manufactures and commerce, as the best sort of division of the labour of the globe. But even on the extravagant supposition that the natural course of things might lead to such a division of labour for a time, and that by such means Europe could raise a population greater than its lands could possibly

possibly support, the consequences ought justly to be dreaded. It is an unquestionable truth that it must answer to every territorial state, in its natural progress to wealth, to manufacture for itself, unless the countries from which it had purchased its manufactures possess some advantages peculiar to them besides capital and skill. But when upon this principle America began to withdraw its corn from Europe, and the agricultural exertions of Europe were inadequate to make up for the deficiency, it would certainly be felt that the temporary advantages of a greater degree of wealth and population (supposing them to have been really attained) had been very dearly purchased by a long period of retrograde movements and misery.

If then a country be of such a size that it may fairly be expected finally to supply its own population with food ; if the population which it can thus support from its own resources in land be such as to enable it to maintain its rank and power among other nations ; and further, if there be reason to fear not only the final withdrawing

drawing of foreign corn used for a certain time, which might be a distant event, but the immediate effects that attend a great predominance of a manufacturing population, such as increased unhealthiness, increased turbulence, increased fluctuations in the price of corn, and increased variableness in the wages of labour ; it may not appear impolitic artificially to maintain a more equal balance between the agricultural and commercial classes by restricting the importation of foreign corn, and making agriculture keep pace with manufactures.

Thirdly, if a country be possessed of such a soil and climate, that the variations in its annual growth of corn are less than in most other countries, this may be an additional reason for admitting the policy of restricting the importation of foreign corn. Countries are very different in the degree of variableness to which their annual supplies are subject ; and though it is unquestionably true that if all were nearly equal in this respect, and the trade in corn *really* free, the steadiness of price in a particular state would

would increase with an increase in the number of the nations connected with it by the commerce of grain ; yet it by no means follows that the same conclusion will hold good when the premises are essentially different ; that is, when some of the countries taken into the circle of trade are subject to very great comparative variations in their supplies of grain, and when this defect is aggravated by the acknowledged want of real freedom in the foreign trade of corn.

Suppose, for instance, that the extreme variations above and below the average quantity of corn grown, were in England $\frac{1}{4}$ and in France $\frac{1}{3}$, a free intercourse between the two countries would probably increase the variableness of the English markets. And if, in addition to England and France, such a country as Bengal could be brought near, and admitted into the circle—a country in which, according to Sir George Colebrook, rice is sometimes sold four times as cheap in one year as in the succeeding without famine or scarcity ^a ;

^a Husbandry of Bengal, p. 108. Note. He observes in the text of the same page that the price of corn fluctuates much more than in Europe.

and where, notwithstanding the frequency of abundant harvests, deficiencies sometimes occur of such extent as necessarily to destroy a considerable portion of the population; it is quite certain that the supplies both of England and France would become very much more variable than before the accession.

In point of fact, there is reason to believe that the British isles, owing to the nature of their soil and climate, are peculiarly free from great variations in their annual produce of grain. If we compare the prices of corn in England and France from the period of the commencement of the Eaton tables to the beginning of the revolutionary war, we shall find that in England the highest price of the quarter of wheat of 8 bushels during the whole of that time was 3*l.* 15*s.* 6*d*₄. (in 1648), and the lowest price 1*l.* 2*s.* 1*d.* (in 1743), while in France the highest price of the septier was 62 francs 78 centimes (in 1662), and the lowest price 8 francs 89 centimes (in 1718)^a.

^a Garnier's Edition of the *Wealth of Nations* vol. ii. Table, p. 188.

In the one case the difference is a little above $3\frac{1}{4}$ times, and in the other very nearly 7 times. In the English tables, during periods of ten or twelve years, only two instances occur of a variation amounting to as much as 3 times ; in the French tables, during periods of the same length, one instance occurs of a variation of above 6 times, and three instances besides of a variation of 4 times or above.

These variations may, perhaps, have been aggravated by a want of freedom in the internal trade of corn, but they are strongly confirmed by the calculations of Turgot, which relate solely to variations of produce, without reference to any difficulties or obstructions in its free transport from one part of the country to another.

On land of an average quality he estimates the produce at seven septiers the arpent in years of great abundance, and three septiers the arpent in years of great scarcity ; while the medium produce he values at five septiers the arpent^a. These calculations he conceives are not far removed from the

^a *Oeuvres de Turgot*, tom. vi. p. 143. Edit. 1808.

truth ;

truth; and proceeding on these grounds he observes that, in a very abundant year, the produce will be five months above its ordinary consumption, and in a very scarce year as much below. These variations are, I should think, much greater than those which take place in this country, at least if we may judge from prices, particularly as in a given degree of scarcity in the two countries there is little doubt that, from the superior riches of England, and the extensive parish relief which it affords to the poorer classes in times of dearth, its prices would rise more above the usual average than those of France.

If we look to the prices of wheat in Spain during the same period, we shall find, in like manner, much greater variations than in England. In a table of the prices of the fanega of wheat in the market of Seville from 1675 to 1764 inclusive, published in the Appendix to the Bullion Report^a, the highest price is 48 reals vellon (in 1677), and the lowest price 7 reals vellon (in 1720), a difference of nearly seven times;

^a Appendix, p. 182.

and in periods of ten or twelve years the difference is, in two or three instances, as much as four times. In another table, from 1788 to 1792 inclusive, relating to the towns of Old Castille, the highest price in 1790 was 109 reals vellon the fanega, and in 1792 the lowest price was only 16 reals vellon the fanega. In the market of Medina del Rio Seco, a town of the kingdom of Leon, surrounded by a very fine corn country, the price of the load of four fane-gas of wheat was, in May, 1800, 100 reals vellon, and in May, 1804, 600 reals vellon, and these were both what are called *low prices*, as compared with the highest prices of the year. The difference would be greater if the high prices were compared with the low prices. Thus, in 1799, the low price of the four fancgas was 88 reals vellon, and in 1804 the high price of the four fancgas was 640 reals vellon,—a difference of above seven times in so short a period as six years ^a.

In Spain, foreign corn is freely admitted; yet the variation of price, in the towns

^a Bullion Report. Appendix, p. 185.

of Andalusia, a province adjoining the sea, and penetrated by the river Guadalquivir, though not so great as those just mentioned, seem to shew that the coasts of the Mediterranean by no means furnish very steady supplies. It is known, indeed, that Spain is the principal competitor of England in the purchase of grain in the Baltic; and as it is quite certain that what may be called the growing or usual price of corn in Spain is much lower than in England, it follows, that the difference between the prices of plentiful and scarce years must be very considerable.

I have not the means of ascertaining the variations in the supplies and prices of the northern nations. They are, however, occasionally great, as it is well known that some of these countries are at times subject to very severe scarcities. But the instances already produced are sufficient to shew, that a country which is advantageously circumstanced with regard to the steadiness of its home supplies may rather diminish than increase this steadiness by uniting its interests with a country less favourably circum-

stanced in this respect; and this steadiness will unquestionably be still further diminished, if the country which is the most variable in its supplies is allowed to inundate the other with its crops when they are abundant, while it reserves to itself the privilege of retaining them in a period of slight scarcity, when its commercial neighbour happens to be in the greatest want^a.

3dly, if a nation be possessed of a territory, not only of sufficient extent to maintain under its actual cultivation a population adequate to a state of the first rank, but of sufficient unexhausted fertility to allow of a very great increase of population, such a circumstance would of course make the measure of restricting the importation of foreign corn more applicable to it.

A country which, though fertile and populous, had been cultivated nearly to the utmost, would have no other means of increasing its population than by the admission of foreign corn. But the British isles

^a These two circumstances essentially change the premises on which the question of a free importation, as applicable to a particular state, must rest.

shew at present no symptoms whatever of this species of exhaustion. The necessary accompaniments of a territory worked to the utmost are very low profits and extent, a very slack demand for labour, low wages, and a stationary population. Some of these symptoms may indeed take place without an exhausted territory; but an exhausted territory cannot take place without all these symptoms. Instead, however, of such symptoms, we have seen in this country, during the twenty years previous to 1814, a high rate of profits and interest, a very great demand for labour, good wages, and an increase of population more rapid, perhaps, than during any period of our history. The capitals which have been laid out in bringing new land into cultivation, or improving the old, must necessarily have yielded good returns, or, under the actual rate of general profits, they would not have been so employed: and although it is strictly true that, as capital accumulates upon the land, its profits must ultimately diminish; yet owing to the increase of agricultural skill, and other causes noticed in a former chapter, these

these two effects of progressive cultivation do not by any means always keep pace with each other. Though they must finally unite and terminate the career of their progress together, they are often, during the course of their progress, separated for a considerable time, and at a considerable distance. In some countries, and some soils, the quantity of capital which can be absorbed before any essential diminution of profits necessarily takes place is so great, that its limit is not easily calculated; and certainly, when we consider what has actually been done in some districts of England and Scotland, and compare it with what remains to be done in other districts, we must allow that no near approach to this limit has yet been made. On account of the high money price of labour, and of the materials of agricultural capital, occasioned partly by direct and indirect taxation, and partly, or perhaps chiefly, by the great prosperity of our foreign commerce, new lands cannot be brought into cultivation, nor great improvements made on the old, without a high money price of grain; but these lands, when

when they have been so brought into cultivation or improved, have by no means turned out unproductive. The quantity and value of their produce have borne a full and fair proportion to the quantity of capital and labour employed upon them ; and they were cultivated with great advantage both to individuals and the state, as long as the same, or nearly the same, relations between the value of produce and the cost of production, which prompted this cultivation, continued to exist.

In such a state of the soil, the British empire might unquestionably be able, not only to support from its own agricultural resources its present population, but double, and in time, perhaps, even treble the number ; and consequently a restriction upon the importation of foreign corn, which might be thought greatly objectionable in a country which had reached nearly the end of its resources, might appear in a very different light in a country capable of supporting from its own lands a very great increase of population.

But it will be said, that although a country

try may be allowed to be capable of maintaining from its own soil not only a great, but an increasing population, yet, if it be acknowledged that, by opening its ports for the free admission of foreign corn, it may be made to support a greater and more rapidly increasing population, it is unjustifiable to go out of our way to check this tendency, and to prevent that degree of wealth and population which would naturally take place.

This is unquestionably a powerful argument; and granting fully the premises, (which however may admit of some doubt,) it cannot be answered upon the principles of political economy solely. I should say, however, that if it could be clearly ascertained that the addition of wealth and population so acquired would subject the society to a greater degree of uncertainty in its supplies of corn, greater fluctuations in the wages of labour, greater unhealthiness and immorality owing to a larger proportion of the population being employed in manufactories, and a greater chance of long and depressing retrograde movements occasioned

sioned by the natural progress of those countries from which corn had been imported; I should have no hesitation in considering such wealth and population as much too dearly purchased. The happiness of a society is, after all, the legitimate end even of its wealth, power, and population. It is certainly true that with a view to the structure of society most favourable to this happiness, and an adequate stimulus to the production of wealth from the soil, a very considerable admixture of commercial and manufacturing population with the agricultural is absolutely necessary; but there is no argument so frequently and obviously fallacious as that which infers that what is good to a certain extent is good to any extent; and though it will be most readily admitted that, in a large landed nation, the evils which belong to the manufacturing and commercial system are much more than counterbalanced by its advantages, as long as it is supported by agriculture; yet, in reference to the effect of the excess which is not so supported, it may fairly be doubted whether the evils do not decidedly predominate.

It

It is observed by Adam Smith, that the “capital which is acquired to any country by commerce and manufactures is all a very uncertain and precarious possession, till some part of it has been secured and realized in the cultivation and improvement of its lands^a.

It is remarked in another place, that the monopoly of the colony trade, by raising the rate of mercantile profit, discourages the improvement of the soil, and retards the natural increase of that great original source of revenue—the rent of land^b.

Now it is certain that, at no period, have the manufactures, commerce and colony trade of the country been in a state to absorb so much capital as during the twenty years ending with 1814. From the year 1764 to the peace of Amiens, it is generally allowed that the commerce and manufactures of the country increased faster than its agriculture, and that it became gradually more and more dependent on foreign corn for its support. Since the peace of Amiens the state of its colonial monopoly and of its manu-

^a Vol. ii. b. iii. c. 4. p. 137.

^b Id. b. iv. c. 8. p. 495.

factories has been such as to demand an unusual quantity of capital; and if the peculiar circumstances of the subsequent war, the high freights and insurance, and the decrees of Buonaparte, had not rendered the importation of foreign corn extremely difficult and expensive, we should at this moment, according to all general principles, have been in the habit of supporting a much larger portion of our population upon it, than at any former period of our history. The cultivation of the country would be in a very different state from what it is at present. Very few or none of those great improvements would have taken place which may be said to have purchased fresh land for the state that no fall of price can destroy. And the peace, or accidents of different kinds, might have curtailed essentially both our colonial and manufacturing advantages, and destroyed or driven away our capital before it had spread itself on the soil, and become national property.

As it is, the practical restrictions thrown in the way of importing foreign corn during the war have forced our steam-engines and

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our colonial monopoly to cultivate our lands; and those very causes which, according to Adam Smith, tend to draw capital from agriculture, and would certainly have so drawn it if we could have continued to purchase foreign corn at the market prices of France and Holland, have been the means of giving such a spur to our agriculture, that it has not only kept pace with a very rapid increase of commerce and manufactures, but has recovered the distance at which it had for many years been left behind, and now marches with them abreast.

But restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn in a country which has great landed resources, not only tend to spread every commercial and manufacturing advantage possessed, whether permanent or temporary, on the soil, and thus, in the language of Adam Smith, secure and realize it; but also tend to prevent those great oscillations in the progress of agriculture and commerce, which are seldom unattended with evil.

It is to be recollectcd, and it is a point of great importance to keep constantly in our minds,

minds, that the distress which has been experienced among almost all classes of society from the sudden fall of prices, except as far as it has been aggravated by the state of the currency, has been occasioned by *natural*, not *artificial*, causes.

There is a tendency to an alternation in the rate of the progress of agriculture and manufactures in the same manner as there is a tendency to an alternation in the rate of the progress of food and population. In periods of peace and uninterrupted trade, these alternations, though not favourable to the happiness and quiet of society, may take place without producing material evil; but the intervention of war is always liable to give them a force and rapidity that must unavoidably produce a convulsion in the state of property.

The war that succeeded to the peace of Amiens found us dependent upon foreign countries for a very considerable portion of our supplies of corn; and we now grow our own consumption, notwithstanding an unusual increase of population in the interval. This great and sudden change in
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the state of our agriculture could only have been effected by very high prices occasioned by an inadequate home supply and the great expense and difficulty of importing foreign corn. But the rapidity with which this change has been effected must necessarily create a glut in the market as soon as the home growth of corn became fully equal or a little in excess above the home consumption ; and, aided only by a small foreign importation, must inevitably occasion a very sudden fall of prices. If the ports had continued open for the free importation of foreign corn, there can be little doubt that the price of corn in 1815 would have been still considerably lower. This low price of corn, even if by means of lowered rents our present state of cultivation could be in a great degree preserved, must give such a check to future improvement, that if the ports were to continue open, we should certainly not grow a sufficiency at home to keep pace with our increasing population ; and at the end of ten or twelve years we might be found by a new war in the same state that we were at the commencement of the present.

present. We should then have the same career of high prices to pass through, the same excessive stimulus to agriculture * followed by the same sudden and depressing check to it, and the same enormous loans borrowed with the price of wheat at 90 or 100 shillings a quarter, and the monied incomes of the landholders and industrious classes of society nearly in proportion, to be paid when wheat is at 50 or 60 shillings a quarter, and the incomes of the landlords and industrious classes of society greatly reduced—a state of things which cannot take place without an excessive aggravation of the difficulty of paying taxes, and particularly that inviolable monied amount which pays the interest of the national debt.

On the other hand a country which so restricts the importations of foreign corn as on an average to grow its own supplies,

* According to the evidence before the House of Lords (Reports, p. 49), the freight and insurance alone on a quarter of corn were greater by 48 shillings in 1811 than in 1814. Without any artificial interference then, it appears that war alone may occasion unavoidably a prodigious increase of price.

and to import merely in periods of scarcity, is not only certain of spreading every invention in manufactures and every peculiar advantage it may possess from its colonies or general commerce on the land, and thus of fixing them to the spot and rescuing them from accidents ; but is necessarily exempt from those violent and distressing convulsions of property which almost unavoidably arise from the coincidence of a general war and an insufficient home supply of corn.

If the late war had found us independent of foreigners for our average consumption, not even our paper currency could have made the prices of our corn approach to the prices which were at one time experienced^a. And if we had continued, during the course of the contest, independent of foreign supplies, except in an occasional scarcity, it is impossible that the growth of

^a It will be found upon examination, that the prices of our corn led the way to the excess and diminution of our paper currency, rather than followed, although the prices of corn could never have been either so high or so low if this excess and diminution had not taken place.

our own consumption, or a little above it, should have produced at the end of the war so universal a feeling of distress.

The chief practical objection to which restrictions on the importation of corn are exposed is a glut from an abundant harvest, which cannot be relieved by exportation. And in the consideration of that part of the question which relates to the fluctuations of prices this objection ought to have its full and fair weight. But the fluctuation of prices arising from this cause has sometimes been very greatly exaggerated. A glut which might essentially distress the farmers of a poor country, might be comparatively little felt by the farmers of a rich one ; and it is difficult to conceive that a nation with an ample capital, and not under the influence of a great shock to commercial confidence, as this country was in 1815, would find much difficulty in reserving the surplus of one year to supply the wants of the next or some future year. It may fairly indeed be doubted whether, in such a country as our own, the fall of price arising from this cause would be so great as that which

would be occasioned by the sudden pouring in of the supplies from an abundant crop in Europe, particularly from those states which do not regularly export corn. If our ports were always open, the existing laws of France would still prevent such a supply as would equalize prices; and French corn would only come in to us in considerable quantities in years of great abundance, when we were the least likely to want it, and when it was most likely to occasion a glut^a.

But if the fall of price occasioned in these two ways would not be essentially different, as it is quite certain that the rise of price in years of general scarcity would be less in those countries which habitually grow their own supplies; it must be allowed that the range of variation will be the least under such a system of restrictions as, without preventing importation

^a Almost all the corn merchants who gave their evidence before the committees of the two houses in 1814 seemed fully aware of the low prices likely to be occasioned by an abundant crop in Europe, if our ports were open to receive it.

when prices are high, will secure in ordinary years a growth equal to the consumption.

One objection however to systems of restriction must always remain. They are essentially unsocial. I certainly think that, in reference to the interests of a particular state, a restriction upon the importation of foreign corn may sometimes be advantageous; but I feel still more certain that in reference to the interests of Europe in general the most perfect freedom of trade in corn, as well as in every other commodity, would be the most advantageous. Such a perfect freedom, however, could hardly fail to be followed by a more free and equal distribution of capital, which, though it would greatly advance the riches and happiness of Europe, would unquestionably render some parts of it poorer and less populous than they are at present; and there is little reason to expect that individual states will ever consent to sacrifice the wealth within their own confines to the wealth of the world.

It is further to be observed, that independently of more direct regulations, tax-

ation alone produces a system of discouragements and encouragements which essentially interferes with the natural relations of commodities to each other ; and as there is no hope of abolishing taxation, it may sometimes be only by a further interference that these natural relations can be restored.

A perfect freedom of trade therefore is a vision which it is to be feared can never be realized. But still it should be our object to make as near approaches to it as we can. It should always be considered as the great general rule. And when any deviations from it are proposed, those who propose them are bound clearly to make out the exception.

CHAP. XIII.

Of increasing Wealth, as it affects the Condition of the Poor.

THE professed object of Adam Smith's *Inquiry* is *the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. There is another, however, still more interesting, which he occasionally mixes with it—the causes which affect the happiness and comfort of the lower orders of society, which in every nation form the most numerous class. These two subjects are, no doubt, nearly connected ; but the nature and extent of this connexion, and the mode in which increasing wealth operates on the condition of the poor, have not been stated with sufficient correctness and precision.

Adam Smith, in his chapter on the wages of labour, considers every increase in the stock or revenue of the society as an increase

crease in the funds for the maintenance of labour ; and having before laid down the position that the demand for those who live by wages can only increase in proportion to the increase of the funds for the payment of wages, the conclusion naturally follows, that every increase of wealth tends to increase the demand for labour and to improve the condition of the lower classes of society ^a.

Upon a nearer examination, however, it will be found that the funds for the maintenance of labour do not necessarily increase with the increase of wealth, and very rarely increase in *proportion* to it ; and that the condition of the lower classes of society does not depend exclusively upon the increase of the funds for the maintenance of labour, or the power of supporting a greater number of labourers.

Adam Smith defines the wealth of a state to be the annual produce of its land and labour. This definition evidently includes

^a Vol. i. book i. c. 8.

manufactured produce as well as the produce of the land. Now, upon the supposition that a nation, from peculiar situation and circumstances, was unable to procure an additional quantity of food, it is obvious that the produce of its labour would not necessarily come to a stand, although the produce of its land or its power of importing corn were incapable of further increase. If the materials of manufactures could be obtained either at home or from abroad, improved skill and machinery might work them up to a greatly increased amount with the same number of hands, and even the number of hands might be considerably increased by an increased taste for manufactures, compared with war and menial service, and by the employment consequently of a greater proportion of the whole population in manufacturing and commercial labour

That such a case does not frequently occur will be most readily allowed. It is not only however possible, but forms the specific limit to the increase of population in the

the natural progress of cultivation, with which limit, the limit to the further progress of wealth is obviously not contemporary. But though cases of this kind do not often occur, because these limits are seldom reached ; yet approximations to them are constantly taking place, and in the usual progress of improvement the increase of wealth and capital is rarely accompanied with a proportionately increased power of supporting an additional number of labourers.

Some ancient nations, which, according to the accounts we have received of them, possessed but an inconsiderable quantity of manufacturing and commercial capital, appear to have cultivated their lands highly by means of an agrarian division of property, and were unquestionably very populous. In such countries, though full of people already, there would evidently be room for a very great increase of capital and riches ; but, allowing all the weight that is in any degree probable to the increased production or importation of food occasioned by the stimulus

stimulus of additional capital, there would evidently not be room for a proportionate increase of the means of subsistence.

If we compare the early state of our most flourishing European kingdoms with their present state, we shall find this conclusion confirmed almost universally by experience.

Adam Smith, in treating of the different progress of opulence in different nations, says, that England, since the time of Elizabeth, has been continually advancing in commerce and manufactures. He then adds, “The cultivation and improvement of the country has no doubt been gradually advancing. But it seems to have followed slowly and at a distance the more rapid progress of commerce and manufactures. The greater part of the country must probably have been cultivated before the reign of Elizabeth, and a very great part of it still remains uncultivated, and the cultivation of the far greater part is much inferior to what it might be.” The same observation is

³ Vol. ii. book iv. c. 4, p. 133.

applicable

applicable to most of the other countries of Europe. The best land would naturally be the first occupied. This land, even with that sort of indolent cultivation and great waste of labour which particularly marked the feudal times, would be capable of supporting a considerable population ; and on the increase of capital, the increasing taste for conveniences and luxuries, combined with the decreasing power of production in the new land to be taken into cultivation, would naturally and necessarily direct the greatest part of this new capital to commerce and manufactures, and occasion a more rapid increase of wealth than of population.

The population of England accordingly in the reign of Elizabeth appears to have been nearly five millions, which would not be very far short of the half of what it is at present; but when we consider the very great proportion which the products of commercial and manufacturing industry now bear to the quantity of food raised for human consumption, it is probably a very low estimate to

to say that the mass of wealth or the stock and revenue of the country must, independently of any change in the value of the circulating medium, have increased above four times. Few of the other countries in Europe have increased to the same extent in commercial and manufacturing wealth as England ; but as far as they have proceeded in this career, all appearances clearly indicate that the progress of their general wealth has been greater than the progress of their means of supporting an additional population.

That every increase of the stock or revenue of a nation cannot be considered as an increase of the real funds for the maintenance of labour will appear in a striking light in the case of China.

Adam Smith observes, that China has probably long been as rich as the nature of her laws and institutions will admit ; but intimates that with other laws and institutions, and if foreign commerce were held in honour, she might still be much richer.

If trade and foreign commerce were held
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in great honour in China, it is evident that, from the great number of her labourers and the cheapness of her labour, she might work up manufactures for foreign sale to a great amount. It is equally evident that, from the great bulk of provisions and the prodigious extent of her inland territory, she could not in return import such a quantity as would be any sensible addition to her means of subsistence. Her immense amount of manufactures therefore she would either consume at home, or exchange for luxuries collected from all parts of the world. At present the country appears to be over-peopled compared with what its stock can employ, and no labour is spared in the production of food. An immense capital could not be employed in China in preparing manufactures for foreign trade, without altering this state of things, and taking off some labourers from agriculture, which might have a tendency to diminish the produce of the country. Allowing, however, that this would be made up, and indeed more than made up, by the beneficial effects of improved skill and economy of labour

labour in the cultivation of the poorest lands, yet, as the quantity of subsistence could be but little increased, the demand for manufactures which would raise the price of labour, would necessarily be followed by a proportionate rise in the price of provisions, and the labourer would be able to command but little more food than before. The country would, however, obviously be advancing in wealth ; the exchangeable value of the annual produce of its land and labour would be annually augmented ; yet the real funds for the maintenance of labour would be nearly stationary. The argument perhaps appears clearer when applied to China, because it is generally allowed that its wealth has been long stationary, and its soil cultivated nearly to the utmost^a.

In all these cases, it is not on account of

^a How far this latter opinion is to be depended upon it is not very easy to say. Improved skill and a saving of labour would certainly enable the Chinese to cultivate some lands with advantage which they cannot cultivate now, but the more general use of horses instead of men might prevent this extended cultivation from giving any encouragement to an increase of people.

any undue preference given to commerce and manufactures, compared with agriculture, that the effect just described takes place, but merely because the powers of the earth in the production of food have narrower limits than the skill and tastes of mankind in giving value to raw materials, and consequently in the approach towards the limits of subsistence there is naturally more room, and consequently more encouragement, for the increase of the one species of wealth than of the other.

It must be allowed then, that the funds for the maintenance of labour do not *necessarily* increase with the increase of wealth, and very *rarely* increase in *proportion* to it.

But the condition of the lower classes of society certainly does not depend exclusively upon the increase of the funds for the maintenance of labour, or the means of supporting more labourers. That these means form always a very powerful ingredient in the condition of the poor, and the main ingredient in the increase of population, is unquestionable. But, in the first place, the comforts of the lower classes of society

society do not depend solely upon food, nor even upon strict necessaries; and they cannot be considered as in a good state unless they have the command of some conveniences and even luxuries. Secondly, the tendency in population fully to keep pace with the means of subsistence must in general prevent the increase of these means from having a great and permanent effect in improving the condition of the poor. And, thirdly, the cause which has the most lasting effect in improving the situation of the lower classes of society depends chiefly upon the conduct and prudence of the individuals themselves, and is therefore not immediately and necessarily connected with an increase in the means of subsistence.

With a view therefore to the other causes which affect the condition of the labouring classes, as well as the increase of the means of subsistence, it may be desirable to trace more particularly the mode in which increasing wealth operates, and to state both the disadvantages as well as the advantages with which it is accompanied.

In the natural and regular progress of a country to a state of great wealth and population, there are two disadvantages to which the lower classes of society seem necessarily to be subjected. The first is, a diminished power of supporting children under the existing habits of the society with respect to the necessities of life. And the second—the employment of a larger proportion of the population in occupations less favourable to health, and more exposed to fluctuations of demand and unsteadiness of wages.

A diminished power of supporting children is an absolutely unavoidable consequence of the progress of a country towards the utmost limits of its population. If we allow that the power of a given quantity of territory to produce food has some limit, we must allow that as this limit is approached, and the increase of population becomes slower and slower, the power of supporting children will be less and less, till finally, when the increase of produce stops, it becomes only sufficient to maintain, on an average, families of such a size as will not

not allow of a further addition of numbers. This state of things is generally accompanied by a fall in the *corn* price of labour; but should this effect be prevented by the prevalence of prudential habits among the lower classes of society, still the result just described must take place; and though, from the powerful operation of the preventive check to increase, the wages of labour estimated even in corn might not be low, yet it is obvious that in this case the power of supporting children would rather be nominal than real; and the moment this power began to be exercised to its apparent extent, it would cease to exist.

The second disadvantage to which the lower classes of society are subjected in the progressive increase of wealth is, that a larger portion of them is engaged in unhealthy occupations, and in employments in which the wages of labour are exposed to much greater fluctuations than in agriculture, and the simpler kinds of domestic trade.

On the state of the poor employed in manufactories with respect to health, and the

fluctuations of wages, I will beg leave to quote a passage from Dr. Aikin's Description of the Country round Manchester:—

“ The invention and improvements of machines to shorten labour have had a surprising influence to extend our trade, and also to call in hands from all parts, particularly children for the cotton-mills. It is the wise plan of Providence, that in this life there shall be no good without its attendant inconvenience. There are many which are too obvious in these cotton-mills, and similar factories, which counteract that increase of population usually consequent on the improved facility of labour. In these, children of a very tender age are employed, many of them collected from the work-houses in London and Westminster, and transported in crowds as apprentices to masters resident many hundred miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the laws had consigned them. These children are usually too long con-

“ fined

“ fined to work in close rooms, often during
“ the whole night. The air they breathe
“ from the oil, &c., employed in the ma-
“ chinery, and other circumstances, is in-
“ jurious; little attention is paid to their
“ cleanliness; and frequent changes from
“ a warm and dense to a cold and thin at-
“ mosphere are predisposing causes to
“ sickness and debility, and particularly to
“ the epidemic fever which is so generally
“ to be met with in these factories. It is
“ also much to be questioned if society does
“ not receive detriment from the manner
“ in which children are thus employed
“ during their early years. They are not
“ generally strong to labour, or capable of
“ pursuing any other branch of business
“ when the term of their apprenticeship
“ expires. The females are wholly unin-
“ structed in sewing, knitting, and other
“ domestic affairs requisite to make them
“ notable and frugal wives and mothers.
“ This is a very great misfortune to them
“ and to the public, as is sadly proved by
“ a comparison of the families of labourers
“ in husbandry and those of manufac-

“ turers in general. In the former we meet
“ with neatness, cleanliness and comfort;
“ in the latter with filth, rags and poverty,
“ although their wages may be nearly
“ double to those of the husbandman. It
“ must be added that the want of early re-
“ ligious instruction and example, and the
“ numerous and indiscriminate association
“ in these buildings, are very unfavourable
“ to their future conduct in life.”

In the same work it appears that the register for the collegiate church of Manchester, from Christmas, 1793, to Christmas, 1794, shewed a decrease of 168 marriages, 538 christenings, and 250 burials. In the parish of Rochdale, in the neighbourhood, a still more melancholy reduction in proportion to the number of people took place. In 1792 the births were 746, the burials

• P. 219. Dr. Aikin says that endeavours have been made to remedy these evils, which in some factories have been attended with success. And it is very satisfactory to be able to add, that since this account was written, the situation of the children employed in the cotton-mills has been further very essentially improved, partly by the interference of the legislature, and partly by the humane and liberal exertions of individuals.

646, and the marriages 339. In 1794 the births were 373, the burials 671, and the marriages 199. The cause of this sudden check to population was the failure of demand and of commercial credit which occurred at the commencement of the war, and such a check could not have taken place in so sudden a manner without the most severe distress, occasioned by the sudden reduction of wages.

In addition to the fluctuations arising from the changes from peace to war and from war to peace, it is well known how subject particular manufactures are to fail from the caprices of taste. The weavers of Spitalfields were plunged into the most severe distress by the fashion of muslins instead of silks; and great numbers of workmen in Sheffield and Birmingham were for a time thrown out of employment owing to the adoption of shoe strings and covered buttons, instead of buckles and metal buttons. Our manufactures, taken in the mass, have increased with prodigious rapidity, but in particular places they have failed; and the parishes where this has happened are invariably

variably loaded with a crowd of poor in the most distressed and miserable condition.

In the evidence brought before the House of Lords during the inquiries which preceded the Corn-Bill of 1815, various accounts are produced from different manufactories, intended to shew that the high price of corn has rather the effect of lowering than of raising the price of manufacturing labour^a. Adam Smith has clearly and correctly stated that the money price of labour depends upon the money price of provisions, and the state of the demand and the supply of labour. And he shews how much he thinks it is occasionally affected by the latter cause, by explaining in what manner it may vary in an opposite direction from the price of provisions during the pressure of a scarcity. The accounts brought before the House of Lords are a striking illustration of this part of his proposition; but they certainly do not prove the incorrectness of the other part of it, as it is quite obvious that, whatever may take place for a few years, the supply of manufacturing labour cannot

* Reports, p. 51.

possibly

possibly be continued in the market unless the natural or necessary price, that is, the price necessary to continue it in the market, be paid, and this of course is not done unless the money price be so proportioned to the price of provisions, that labourers are enabled to bring up families of such a size as will supply the number of hands required.

But though these accounts do not in any degree invalidate the usual doctrines respecting labour, or the statements of Adam Smith, they shew very clearly the great fluctuations to which the condition of the manufacturing labourer is subjected.

In looking over these accounts it will be found that in some cases the price of weaving has fallen a third, or nearly one-half, at the same time that the price of wheat has risen a third, or nearly onehalf; and yet these proportions do not always express the full amount of the fluctuations, as it sometimes happens that when the price is low, the state of the demand will not allow of the usual number of hours of working ; and when the price is high, it will admit of extra hours.

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That from the same causes there are sometimes variations of a similar kind in the price of task-work in agriculture will be readily admitted; but, in the first place, they do not appear to be nearly so considerable; and secondly, the great mass of agricultural labourers is employed by the day, and a sudden and general fall in the money price of agricultural day-labour is an event of extremely rare occurrence ^a.

It must be allowed then, that in the natural and usual progress of wealth, the means of marrying early and supporting a family are diminished, and a greater proportion of the population is engaged in employments less favourable to health and morals, and more subject to fluctuations in the price of labour, than the population employed in agriculture.

These are no doubt considerable disadvantages, and they would be sufficient to

^a Almost the only instance on record in this country is that which has lately taken place (1815 and 1816), occasioned by an unparalleled fall in the exchangeable value of the raw produce, which has necessarily disabled the holders of it from employing the same quantity of labour at the same price.

render the progress of riches decidedly unfavourable to the condition of the poor, if they were not counteracted by advantages which nearly, if not fully, counterbalance them.

And, first, it is obvious that the profits of stock are that source of revenue from which the middle classes are chiefly maintained ; and the increase of capital, which is both the cause and effect of increasing riches, may be said to be the efficient cause of the emancipation of the great body of society from a dependence on the landlords. In a country of limited extent, consisting of fertile land divided into large properties, as long as the capital remains inconsiderable, the structure of society is most unfavourable to liberty and good government. This was exactly the state of Europe in the feudal times. The landlords could in no other way spend their incomes than by maintaining a great number of idle followers ; and it was by the growth of capital in all the employments to which it is directed that the pernicious power of the landlords was destroyed, and their dependent

pendent followers were turned into merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, farmers, and independent labourers ;—a change of prodigious advantage to the great body of society, including the labouring classes.

Secondly ; in the natural progress of cultivation and wealth, the production of an additional quantity of corn will require more labour, while, at the same time, from the accumulation and better distribution of capital, the continual improvements made in machinery, and the facilities opened to foreign commerce, manufactures and foreign commodities will be produced or purchased with less labour ; and consequently a given quantity of corn will command a much greater quantity of manufactures and foreign commodities than while the country was poor. Although, therefore, the labourer may earn less corn than before, the superior value which every portion which he does not consume in kind will have in the purchase of conveniences, may more than counterbalance this diminution. He will not indeed have the same power of maintaining a large

a large family ; but with a small family he may be better lodged and clothed, and better able to command the decencies and comforts of life.

Thirdly ; it seems to be proved by experience, that the lower classes of society seldom acquire a decided taste for conveniences and comforts till they become plentiful compared with food, which they never do till food has become in some degree scarce. If the labourer can obtain the full support of himself and family by two or three days' labour; and if, to furnish himself with conveniences and comforts, he must work three or four days more, he will generally think the sacrifice too great compared with the objects to be obtained, which are not strictly necessary to him, and will therefore often prefer the luxury of idleness to the luxury of improved lodging and clothing. This is said by Humboldt to be particularly the case in some parts of South America, and to a certain extent prevails in Ireland, India, and all countries where food is plentiful compared with capital and manufactured commodities. On the other hand,

hand, if the main part of the labourer's time be occupied in procuring food, habits of industry are necessarily generated, and the remaining time, which is but inconsiderable compared with the commodities it will purchase, is seldom grudged. It is under these circumstances, particularly when combined with a good government, that the lower classes of society are most likely to acquire a decided taste for the conveniences and comforts of life; and this taste may be such as even to prevent, after a certain period, a further fall in the corn price of labour. But if the corn price of labour continues tolerably high while the relative value of commodities compared with corn falls very considerably, the labourer is placed in a most favourable situation. Owing to his decided taste for conveniences and comforts, the good corn wages of labour will not generally lead to early marriages; yet in individual cases, where large families occur, there will be the means of supporting them independently, by the sacrifice of the accustomed conveniences and comforts; and thus the poorest

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of the lower classes will rarely be stinted in food, while the great mass of them will not only have sufficient means of subsistence, but be able to command no inconsiderable quantity of those conveniences and comforts, which, at the same time that they gratify a natural or acquired want, tend unquestionably to improve the mind and elevate the character.

On an attentive review then of the effects of increasing wealth on the condition of the poor, it appears that, although such an increase does not imply a proportionate increase of the funds for the maintenance of mere labour, yet it brings with it advantages to the lower classes of society which may fully counterbalance the disadvantages with which it is attended; and, strictly speaking, the good or bad condition of the poor is not *necessarily* connected with any particular stage in the progress of society to its full complement of wealth. A rapid increase of wealth indeed, whether it consists principally in additions to the means of subsistence or to the stock of conveniences and comforts, will always, *cæteris paribus*,

paribus, have a favourable effect on the poor; but the influence even of this cause is greatly modified and altered by other circumstances, and nothing but the union of individual prudence with the skill and industry which produce wealth can permanently secure to the lower classes of society that share of it which it is on every account so desirable that they should possess.

ADDITION TO CHAP. XIV.

[Insertion in p. 204, vol. II. Edition 1807.]

In stating that in this, and all the other cases and systems which have been considered, the progress of population will be mainly regulated and limited by the real wages of labour, it is necessary to remark that practically the current wages of labour estimated in the necessaries of life do not always correctly represent the quantity of these necessaries which it is in the power of the lower classes to consume; and that sometimes the error is in excess and sometimes in defect.

In a state of things when the prices of corn and of all sorts of commodities are rising, the money wages of labour do not always rise in proportion; but this apparent disadvantage to the labouring classes is sometimes more than counterbalanced by

by the plenty of employment, the quantity of task-work that can be obtained, and the opportunity given to women and children to add considerably to the earnings of the family. In this case, the power of the labouring classes to command the necessaries of life is much greater than is implied by the current rate of their wages, and will of course have a proportionably greater effect on the population.

On the other hand, when prices are generally falling, it often happens that the current rate of wages does not fall in proportion ; but this apparent advantage is in the same manner often more than counterbalanced by the scarcity of work, and the impossibility of finding employment for all the members of a labourer's family who are able and willing to be industrious. In this case, the powers of the labouring classes to command the necessaries of life will evidently be less than is implied by the current rate of their wages.

In the same manner parish allowances distributed to families, the habitual practice

tice of task-work, and the frequent employment of women and children, will affect population like a rise in the real wages of labour. And, on the other hand, the paying of every sort of labour by the day, the absence of employment for women and children, and the practice among labourers of not working more than three or four days in the week, either from inveterate indolence, or any other cause, will affect population like a low price of labour.

In all these cases the real earnings of the labouring classes throughout the year, estimated in food, are different from the apparent wages; but it will evidently be the average earnings of the families of the labouring classes throughout the year on which the encouragement to marriage, and the power of supporting children, will depend, and not merely the wages of day-labour estimated in food.

An attention to this very essential point will explain the reason why, in many instances, the progress of population does not appear to be regulated by what are

usually called the real wages of labour ; and why this progress may occasionally be greater, when the price of a day's labour will purchase rather less than the medium quantity of corn, than when it will purchase rather more.

In our own country, for instance, about the middle of the last century, the price of corn was very low ; and, for twenty years together, from 1735 to 1755, a day's labour would, on an average, purchase a peck of wheat. During this period, population increased at a moderate rate ; but not by any means with the same rapidity as from 1790 to 1811, when the average wages of day-labour would not in general purchase quite so much as a peck of wheat. In the latter case, however, there was a more rapid accumulation of capital, and a greater demand for labour ; and though the continued rise of provisions still kept them rather ahead of wages, yet the fuller employment for every body that would work, the greater quantity of task-work done, the higher relative value of corn compared with manufactures

factures, the increased use of potatoes, and the greater sums distributed in parish allowances, unquestionably gave to the lower classes of society the power of commanding a greater quantity of food, and will account for the more rapid increase of population in the latter period, in perfect consistency with the general principle.

On similar grounds, if, in some warm climates and rich soils, where corn is cheap, the quantity of food earned by a day's labour be such as to promise a more rapid progress in population than is really known to take place, the fact will be fully accounted for, if it be found that inveterate habits of indolence, fostered by a vicious government, and a slack demand for labour, prevent any thing like constant employment^a. It would of course require high corn wages of day-labour even to keep up the supply of a stationary population, where

^a This observation is exemplified in the slow progress of population in some parts of the Spanish dominions in America, compared with its progress in the United States.

the days of working would only amount to half of the year.

In the case also of the prevalence of prudential habits, and a decided taste for the conveniences and comforts of life, as, according to the supposition, these habits and tastes do not operate as an encouragement to early marriages, and are not in fact spent almost entirely in the purchase of corn, it is quite consistent with the general principles laid down, that the population should not proceed at the same rate as is usual, *cæteris paribus*, in other countries, where the corn wages of labour are equally high.

ADDITION TO CHAP. XIV.

[Insertion in p. 214, vol. II. Edition 1807.]

What is here said of the order of precedence with respect to agriculture and population, does not invalidate what was said in an earlier part of this work on the tendency to an oscillation or alternation in the increase of population and food in the natural course of their progress. In this progress nothing is more usual than for the population to increase at certain periods faster than food ; indeed it is a part of the general principle that it should do so ; and when the money wages of labour are prevented from falling by the employment of the increasing population in manufactures, the rise in the price of corn which the increased competition for it occasions is practically the most natural and frequent stimulus to agriculture. But then it must be recollected that the great relative increase of population absolutely implies a previous

previous increase of food at some time or other greater than the lowest wants of the people. Without this, the population could not possibly have gone forward ^a.

Universally, when the population of a country is for a longer or shorter time stationary, owing to the low corn wages of labour, a case which is not unfrequent, it is obvious that nothing but a previous increase of food, or at least an increase of the portion awarded to the labourer, can enable the population again to proceed forwards.

And, in the same manner, with a view to any essential improvement in the condition of the labourer, which is to give him a greater effective command over the means of comfortable subsistence, it is absolutely necessary that, setting out from the lowest

^a According to the principle of population, the human race has a tendency to increase faster than food. It has therefore a constant tendency to people a country fully up to the limits of subsistence, but by the laws of nature it can never go beyond them, meaning, of course, by these limits, the lowest quantity of food which will maintain a stationary population. Population, therefore, can never, strictly speaking, precede food.

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point, the increase of food must precede and be greater than the increase of population.

Strictly speaking then, as man cannot live without food, there can be no doubt that in the order of precedence food must take the lead; although when, from the state of cultivation and other causes, the average quantity of food awarded to the labourer is considerably more than sufficient to maintain a stationary population, it is quite natural that the diminution of this quantity, from the tendency of population to increase, should be one of the most powerful and constant stimulants to agriculture.

It is worthy also of remark that on this account a stimulus to the increase of agriculture is much more easy when, from the prevalence of prudential restraint, or any other cause, the labourer is well paid; as in this case a rise in the price of corn, occasioned either by the increase of population or a foreign demand, will increase for a time the profits of the farmer, and often enable him to make permanent improvements:

ments ; whereas, when the labourer is paid so scantily that his wages will not allow even of any temporary diminution without a diminution of population, the increase of cultivation and population must from the first be accompanied with a fall of profits. The prevalence of the preventive check to population and the good average wages of the labourer will rather promote than prevent that occasional increase and decrease of them, which as a stimulus seems to be favourable to the increase both of food and population.

ADDITION TO CHAP. XIV.

[*Insertion in p. 222, vol. II. Edition 1807.*]

It may be thought that the effects here referred to as resulting from greatly increased resources, could not take place in a country where there were towns and manufactories ; and that they are not quite consistent with what was said in a former part of this work, namely, that the ultimate check to population (the want of food) is never the immediate check, except in cases of actual famine.

If the expressions are unguardedly strong, they will certainly allow of considerable mitigation, without any sensible diminution in the practical force and application of the argument. But I am inclined to think that, though they are unquestionably strong, they are not very far from the truth. The great cause which fills towns and manufactories is an insufficiency of employment, and consequently of the means of support in

in the country ; and if each labourer, in the parish where he was born, could command food, clothing, and lodging for ten children, the population of the towns would soon bear but a small proportion to the population in the country. And if to this consideration we add that, in the case supposed, the proportion of births and marriages in towns would be greatly increased, and all the mortality arising from poverty almost entirely removed, I should by no means be surprised (after a short interval for the change of habits) at an increase of population, even in China, equal to that which is referred to in the text.

With regard to this country, as it is positively known that the rate of increase has changed from that which would double the population in 120 years, or more, to that which would double it in 55 years, under a great increase of towns and manufactures, I feel very little doubt that, if the resources of the country were so augmented and distributed, as that every man could marry at 18 or 20, with a certainty of being able to support the largest family, the population of

of the British Isles would go on increasing at a rate which would double the population in 25 years. It appears, from our registers, that England is a healthier country than America. At the time that America was increasing with extraordinary rapidity, in some of her towns the deaths exceeded the births. In the English towns, with their present improvements, I do not think this would ever be the case, if all the lower classes could marry as soon as they pleased, and there was little or no premature mortality from the consequences of poverty.

But whether the habits and customs of an old state could be so changed by an abundance of food, as to make it increase nearly like a new colony, is a question of mere curiosity. The argument only requires that a change from scanty to abundant means of supporting a family should occasion, in old states, a marked increase of population ; and this, it is conceived, cannot possibly be denied.

BOOK IV. CHAP. VII.

[To follow p. 316, vol. II. Edition 1807.]

*Effects of the Knowledge of the principal Cause of Poverty on Civil Liberty, (continued) **

THE reasonings of the foregoing chapter have been strikingly confirmed by the events of the last two or three years. Perhaps there never was a period when more erroneous views were formed by the lower classes of society of the effects to be expected from reforms in the government, when these erroneous views were more immediately founded on a total misapprehension of the principal cause of poverty, and when they more directly led to results unfavourable to liberty.

One of the main causes of complaint against the government has been, that a considerable number of labourers, who are both able and willing to work, are wholly out of employment, and unable consequently to command the necessities of life.

* Written in 1817.

That

That this state of things is one of the most afflicting events that can occur in civilized life, that it is a natural and pardonable cause of discontent among the lower classes of society, and that every effort should be made by the higher classes to mitigate it, consistently with a proper care not to render it permanent, no man of humanity can doubt. But that such a state of things may occur in the best-conducted and most economical government that ever existed is as certain, as that governments have not the power of commanding with effect the resources of a country to be progressive, when they are naturally stationary or declining.

It will be allowed that periods of prosperity may occur in any well-governed state, during which an extraordinary stimulus may be given to its wealth and population, which cannot in its nature be permanent. If, for instance, new channels of trade are opened, new colonies are possessed, new inventions take place in machinery, and new and great improvements are made in agriculture, it is quite obvious that while

while the markets at home and abroad will readily take off at advantageous prices the increasing produce, there must be a rapid increase of capital, and an unusual stimulus given to the population. On the other hand, if subsequently these channels of trade are either closed by accident or contracted by foreign competition ; if colonies are lost, or the same produce is supplied from other quarters ; if the markets, either from glut or competition, cease to extend with the extension of the new machinery ; and if the improvements in agriculture from any cause whatever cease to be progressive, it is as obvious that, just at the time when the stimulus to population has produced its greatest effect, the means of employing and supporting this population may, in the natural course of things, and without any fault whatever in the government, become deficient. This failure must unavoidably produce great distress among the labouring classes of society ; but it is quite clear that no inference can be drawn from this distress that a radical change is required in the government ; and the attempt to accomplish such

such a change might only aggravate the evil.

It has been supposed in this case, that the government has in no respect by its conduct contributed to the pressure in question, a supposition which in practice perhaps will rarely be borne out by the fact. It is unquestionably in the power of a government to produce great distress by war and taxation, and it requires some skill to distinguish the distress which is the natural result of these causes, from that which is occasioned in the way just described. In our own case unquestionably both descriptions of causes have combined, but the former in a greater degree than the latter. War and taxation, as far as they operate directly and simply, tend to destroy or retard the progress of capital, produce and population; but during the late war these checks to prosperity have been much more than overbalanced by a combination of circumstances which has given an extraordinary stimulus to production. That for this overbalance of advantages the country cannot be considered as much indebted to

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the government, is most certain. The government during the last twenty-five years has shewn no very great love either of peace or liberty; and no particular economy in the use of the national resources. It has proceeded in a very straight-forward manner to spend great sums in war, and to raise them by very heavy taxes. It has no doubt done its part towards the dilapidation of the national resources. But still the broad fact must stare every impartial observer in the face, that at the end of the war in 1814 the national resources were not dilapidated; and that not only were the wealth and population of the country considerably greater than they were at the commencement of the war, but that they had increased in the interval at a more rapid rate than was ever experienced before.

Perhaps this may justly be considered as one of the most extraordinary facts in history; and it certainly follows from it, that the sufferings of the country since the peace have not been occasioned so much by the usual and most natural effects to be expected

expected from war and taxation, as by the sudden ceasing of an extraordinary stimulus to production, the distresses consequent upon which, though increased no doubt by the weight of taxation, do not essentially arise from it, and are not directly therefore, and immediately, to be relieved by its removal.

That the labouring classes of society should not be fully aware that the main causes of their distress are to a certain extent and for a certain time, irremediable, is natural enough; and that they should listen much more readily and willingly to those who confidently promise immediate relief, rather than to those who can only tell them unpalatable truths, is by no means surprising. But it must be allowed that full advantage has been taken by the popular orators and writers of a crisis which has given them so much power. Partly from ignorance, and partly from design, every thing that could tend to enlighten the labouring classes as to the real nature of their situation, and encourage them to

bear an unavoidable pressure with patience, has been either sedulously kept out of their view, or clamorously reprobated ; and every thing that could tend to deceive them, to aggravate and encourage their discontents, and to raise unreasonable and extravagant expectations as to the relief to be expected from reform, has been as sedulously brought forward. If under these circumstances the reforms proposed had been accomplished, it is impossible that the people should not have been most cruelly disappointed ; and under a system of universal suffrage and annual parliaments, a general disappointment of the people would probably lead to every sort of experiment in government, till the career of change was stopped by a military despotism. The warmest friends of genuine liberty might justly feel alarmed at such a prospect. To a cause conducted upon such principles, and likely to be attended with such results, they could not of course, consistently with their duty, lend any assistance. And, if with great difficulty, and against the sense of the great mass

mass of petitioners, they were to effect a more moderate and more really useful reform, they could not but feel certain that the unavoidable disappointment of the people would be attributed to the half-measures which had been pursued ; and that they would be either forced to proceed to more radical changes, or submit to a total loss of their influence and popularity by stopping short while the distresses of the people were unrelieved, their discontents unallayed, and the great *panacea* on which they had built their sanguine expectations untried.

These considerations have naturally paralyzed the exertions of the best friends of liberty ; and those salutary reforms which are acknowledged to be necessary in order to repair the breaches of time, and improve the fabric of our constitution, are thus rendered much more difficult, and consequently much less probable.

But not only have the false expectations and extravagant demands suggested by the leaders of the people given an easy victory to government over every proposition for

reform, whether violent or moderate, but they have furnished the most fatal instruments of offensive attack against the constitution itself. They are naturally calculated to excite some alarm, and to check moderate reform ; but alarm, when once excited, seldom knows where to stop, and the causes of it are particularly liable to be exaggerated. There is reason to believe that it has been under the influence of exaggerated statements, and of inferences drawn by exaggerated fears from these statements, that acts unfavourable to liberty have been passed without an adequate necessity. But the power of creating these exaggerated fears, and of passing these acts, has been unquestionably furnished by the extravagant expectations of the people. And it must be allowed that the present times furnish a very striking illustration of the doctrine, that an ignorance of the principal cause of poverty is peculiarly unfavourable, and that a knowledge of it must be peculiarly favourable, to the cause of civil liberty.

CHAP. XII^a.

[To follow p. 387, vol. II. Edition 1807.]

Different Plans of improving the Condition of the Poor considered (continued).

THE increasing portion of the society which has of late years become either wholly or partially dependent upon parish assistance, together with the increasing burden of the poor's rates on the landed property, has for some time been working a gradual change in the public opinion respecting the benefits resulting to the labouring classes of society, and to society in general, from a legal provision for the poor. But the distress which has followed the peace of 1814, and the great and sudden pressure which it has occasioned on the parish rates, have accelerated this change in a very marked manner. More just and enlightened views on the subject are daily gaining ground ; the difficulties attending a legal provision for the poor are better un-

* Written in 1817.

derstood,

derstood, and more generally acknowledged ; and opinions are now seen in print, and heard in conversation, which twenty years ago would almost have been considered as treason to the interests of the state.

This change of public opinion, stimulated by the severe pressure of the moment, has directed an unusual portion of attention to the subject of the poor-laws ; and as it is acknowledged that the present system has essentially failed, various plans have been proposed either as substitutes or improvements. It may be useful to inquire shortly how far the plans which have already been published are calculated to accomplish the ends which they propose. It is generally thought that some measure of importance will be the result of the present state of public opinion. To the permanent success of any such measure, it is absolutely necessary that it should apply itself in some degree to the real source of the difficulty. Yet there is reason to fear, that notwithstanding the present improved knowledge

knowledge on the subject, this point may be too much overlooked.

Among the plans which appear to have excited a considerable degree of the public attention, is one of Mr. Owen. I have already adverted to some views of Mr. Owen in a chapter on Systems of Equality, and spoken of his experience with the respect which is justly due to it. If the question were merely how to accommodate, support and train, in the best manner, societies of 1200 people, there are perhaps few persons more entitled to attention than Mr. Owen : but in the plan which he has proposed, he seems totally to have overlooked the nature of the problem to be solved. This problem is, *How to provide for those who are in want, in such a manner as to prevent a continual increase of their numbers, and of the proportion which they bear to the whole society.* And it must be allowed that Mr. Owen's plan not only does not make the slightest approach towards accomplishing this object, but seems to be peculiarly calculated to effect an object exactly the reverse of it,

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that is, to increase and multiply the number of paupers.

If the establishments which he recommends could really be conducted according to his apparent intentions, the order of nature and the lessons of providence would indeed be in the most marked manner reversed ; and the idle and profligate would be placed in a situation which might justly be the envy of the industrious and virtuous. The labourer or manufacturer who is now ill lodged and ill clothed, and obliged to work twelve hours a day to maintain his family, could have no motive to continue his exertions, if the reward for slackening them, and seeking parish assistance, was good lodging, good clothing, the maintenance and education of all his children, and the exchange of twelve hours hard work in an unwholesome manufactory for four or five hours of easy agricultural labour on a pleasant farm. Under these temptations, the numbers yearly falling into the new establishments from the labouring and manufacturing classes, together with the rapid increase by procreation of the societies themselves,

themselves, would very soon render the first purchases of land utterly incompetent to their support. More land must then be purchased, and fresh settlements made; and if the higher classes of society were bound to proceed in the system according to its apparent spirit and intention, there cannot be a doubt that the whole nation would shortly become a nation of paupers with a community of goods.

Such a result might not perhaps be alarming to Mr. Owen. It is just possible indeed that he may have had this result in contemplation when he proposed his plan, and have thought that it was the best mode of quietly introducing that community of goods which he believes is necessary to complete the virtue and happiness of society. But to those who totally dissent from him as to the effects to be expected from a community of goods; to those who are convinced that even his favourite doctrine, that a man can be trained to produce more than he consumes, which is no doubt true at present, may easily cease to be true, when cultivation is pushed beyond the bounds prescribed to it by private property;

perty;^a the approaches towards a system of this kind will be considered as approaches towards a system of universal indolence, poverty and wretchedness.

Upon the supposition then, that Mr. Owen's plan could be effectively executed, and that the various pauper societies scattered over the country could at first be made to realize his most sanguine wishes, such might be expected to be their termination in a moderately short time, from the natural and necessary action of the principle of population.

But it is probable that the other grand objection to all systems of common property would even at the very outset confound the experience of Mr. Owen, and destroy the happiness to which he looks forward. In the society at the Lanerk Mills, two powerful stimulants to industry and good conduct are in action, which would be totally wanting in the societies proposed. At Lanerk, the whole of every man's earnings is his own; and his power of maintaining himself, his wife and children, in decency and comfort, will be in

^a See C. x. B. iii. p. 156.

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exact proportion to his industry, sobriety and economy. At Lanerk, also, if any workman be perseveringly indolent and negligent, if he get drunk and spoil his work, or if in any way he conduct himself essentially ill, he not only naturally suffers by the diminution of his earnings, but may at any time be turned off, and the society be relieved from the influence and example of a profligate and dangerous member. On the other hand, in the pauper establishments proposed in the present plan, the industry, sobriety and good conduct of each individual, would be very feebly indeed connected with his power of maintaining himself and family comfortably; and in the case of persevering idleness and misconduct, instead of the simple and effective remedy of dismission, recourse must be had to a system of direct punishment of some kind or other, determined, and enforced by authority, which is always painful and distressing, and generally inefficient.

I confess it appears to me that the most successful experience, in such an establishment

ment as that of Lanerk, furnishes no ground whatever to say what could be done towards the improvement of society in an establishment where the produce of all the labour employed would go to a common stock, and dismissal from the very nature and object of the institution, would be impossible. If under such disadvantages the proper management of these establishments were within the limits of possibility, what judgment, what firmness, what patience, would be required for the purpose! But where are such qualities to be found in sufficient abundance to manage one or two millions of people?

On the whole then it may be concluded, that Mr. Owen's plan would have to encounter obstacles that really appear to be insuperable, even at its first outset; and that if these could by any possible means be overcome, and the most complete success attained, the system would, without some most unnatural and unjust laws to prevent the progress of population, lead to a state of universal poverty and distress, in which, though all the rich might be made poor, none of the poor could be made rich,—not even

even so rich as a common labourer at present.

The plan for bettering the condition of the labouring classes of the community, published by Mr. Curwen, is professedly a slight sketch ; but principles, not details, are what it is our present object to consider ; and the principles on which he would proceed are declared with sufficient distinctness, when he states the great objects of his design to be,

1. Meliorating the present wretched condition of the lower orders of the people.
2. Equalizing by a new tax the present poor's rates, which *must* be raised for their relief.
3. And giving to all those, who may think proper to place themselves under its protection, a voice in the local management and distribution of the fund destined for their support.

The first proposition is, of course, or ought to be, the object of every plan proposed. And the two last may be considered as the modes by which it is intended to accomplish it.

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But it is obvious that these two propositions, though they may be both desirable on other accounts, not only do not really touch, but do not even propose to touch, the great problem. We wish to check the increase and diminish the proportion of paupers, in order to give greater wealth, happiness and independence to the mass of the labouring classes. But the equalization of the poor's rates, simply considered, would have a very strong tendency to increase rather than to diminish the number of the dependent poor. At present the parochial rates fall so very heavily upon one particular species of property, that the persons, whose business it is to allow them, have in general a very strong interest indeed to keep them low; but if they fell equally on all sorts of property, and particularly if they were collected from large districts, or from counties, the local distributors would have comparatively but very feeble motives to reduce them, and they might be expected to increase with great rapidity.

It may be readily allowed, however, that
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the peculiar weight with which the poor's rates press upon land is essentially unfair. It is particularly hard upon some country parishes, where the births greatly exceed the deaths, owing to the constant emigrations which are taking place to towns and manufactories, that, under any circumstances, a great portion of these emigrants should be returned upon them, when old, disabled, or out of work. Such parishes may be totally without the power of furnishing either work or support for all the persons born within their precincts. In fact, the same number would not have been born in them, unless these emigrations had taken place. And it is certainly hard therefore that parishes so circumstanced should be obliged to receive and maintain all who may return to them in distress. Yet, in the present state of the country, the most pressing evil is not the weight upon the land, but the increasing proportion of paupers. And, as the equalization of the rates would certainly have a tendency to increase this proportion, I should be sorry to see such a measure introduced, even if it

it were easily practicable, unless accompanied by some very strong and decisive limitations to the continued increase of the rates so equalized.

The other proposition of Mr. Curwen will, in like manner, be found to afford no security against the increase of pauperism. We know perfectly well that the funds of the friendly societies, as they are at present constituted, though managed by the contributors themselves, are seldom distributed with the economy necessary to their permanent efficiency; and in the national societies proposed, as a considerable part of the fund would be derived from the poor's rates, there is certainly reason to expect that every question which could be influenced by the contributors would be determined on principles still more indulgent and less economical.

On this account it may well be doubted, whether it would ever be advisable to mix any public money, derived from assessments, with the subscriptions of the labouring classes. The probable result would be, that in the case of any failure in the funds

funds of such societies, arising from erroneous calculations and too liberal allowances, it would be expected that the whole of the deficiency should be made up by the assessments. And any rules which might have been made to limit the amount applied in this way would probably be but a feeble barrier against claims founded on a plan brought forward by the higher classes of society.

Another strong objection to this sort of union of parochial and private contributions is, that from the first the members of such societies could not justly feel themselves independent. If one half or one third of the fund were to be subscribed from the parish, they would stand upon a very different footing from the members of the present benefit-clubs. While so considerable a part of the allowances to which they might be entitled in sickness or in age would really come from the poor's rates, they would be apt to consider the plan as what, in many respects, it really would be,—only a different mode of raising the rates. If the system were to become ge-

neral, the contributions of the labouring classes would have nearly the effects of a tax on labour, and such a tax has been generally considered as more unfavourable to industry and production than most other taxes.

The best part of Mr. Curwen's plan is that which proposes to give a credit to each contributor in proportion to the amount of his contributions, and to make his allowance in sickness, and his annuity in old age, dependent upon this amount ; but this object could easily be accomplished without the objectionable accompaniments. It is also very properly observed, that “ want of employment must furnish no “ claims on the society ; for, if this excuse “ were to be admitted, it would most proba- “ bly be attended with the most pernicious “ consequences.” Yet it is at the same time rather rashly intimated, that employ- ment must be found for all who are able to work ; and, in another place, it is observed, that timely assistance would be afforded by these societies, without degradation, on all temporary occasions of suspended labour.

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On the whole, when it is considered that a large and probably increasing amount of poor's rates would be subscribed to these societies; that on this account their members could hardly be considered as independent of parish assistance; and that the usual poor's rates would still remain to be applied as they are now, without any proposed limitations, there is little hope that Mr. Curwen's plan would be successful in diminishing the whole amount of the rates and the proportion of dependent poor.

There are two errors respecting the management of the poor, into which the public seem inclined to fall at the present moment. The first is a disposition to attach too much importance to the effects of subscriptions from the poor themselves, without sufficient attention to the mode in which they are distributed. But the mode of distribution is much the more important point of the two; and if this be radically bad, it is of little consequence in what manner the subscriptions are raised, whether from the poor themselves or from any other quarter. If the labouring classes were universally to

contribute what might at first appear a very ample proportion of their earnings, for their own support in sickness and in old age, when out of work, and when the family consisted of more than two children ; it is quite certain that the funds would become deficient. Such a mode of distribution implies a power of supporting a rapidly increasing and unlimited population on a limited territory, and must therefore terminate in aggravated poverty. Our present friendly societies or benefit-clubs aim at only limited objects, which are susceptible of calculation ; yet many have failed, and many more it is understood are likely to fail from the insufficiency of their funds. If any society were to attempt to give much more extensive assistance to its members ; if it were to endeavour to imitate what is partially effected by the poor-laws, or to accomplish those objects which Condorcet thought were within the power of proper calculations ; the failure of its funds, however large at first, and from whatever sources derived, would be absolutely inevitable. In short, it cannot be too often or too strongly impressed

impressed upon the public, especially when any question for the improvement of the condition of the poor is in agitation, that no application of knowledge and ingenuity to this subject, no efforts either of the poor or of the rich, or both, in the form of contributions, or in any other way, can possibly place the labouring classes of society in such a state as to enable them to marry generally at the same age in an old and fully-peopled country as they may do with perfect safety and advantage in a new one.

The other error towards which the public seems to incline at present is that of laying too much stress upon the *employment* of the poor. It seems to be thought that one of the principal causes of the failure of our present system is the not having properly executed that part of the 43d of Elizabeth which enjoins the purchase of materials to set the poor to work. It is certainly desirable, on many accounts, to employ the poor when it is practicable, though it will always be extremely difficult to make people work actively who are without the usual and most natural motives to such exertions; and

and a system of coercion involves the necessity of placing great power in the hands of persons very likely to abuse it. Still however it is probable that the poor might be employed more than they have hitherto been, in a way to be advantageous to their habits and morals, without being prejudicial in other respects. But we should fall into the grossest error if we were to imagine that any essential part of the evils of the poor-laws, or of the difficulties under which we are at present labouring, has arisen from not employing the poor; or if we were to suppose that any possible scheme for giving work to all who are out of employment can ever in any degree apply to the source of these evils and difficulties, so as to prevent their recurrence. In no conceivable case can the forced employment of the poor, though managed in the most judicious manner, have any direct tendency to proportion more accurately the supply of labour to the natural demand for it. And without great care and caution it is obvious that it may have a pernicious effect of an opposite kind. When, for instance, from deficient

deficient demand or deficient capital, labour has a strong tendency to fall, if we keep it up to its usual price by creating an artificial demand by public subscriptions or advances from the government, we evidently prevent the population of the country from adjusting itself gradually to its diminished resources, and act much in the same manner as those, who would prevent the price of corn from rising in a scarcity, which must necessarily terminate in increased distress.

Without then meaning to object to all plans for employing the poor, some of which, at certain times and with proper restrictions, may be useful as temporary measures, it is of great importance, in order to prevent ineffectual efforts and continued disappointments, to be fully aware that the permanent remedy which we are seeking cannot possibly come from this quarter.

It may indeed be affirmed with the most perfect confidence that there is only one class of causes from which any approaches towards a remedy can be rationally expected ; and that consists of whatever has

has a tendency to increase the prudence and foresight of the labouring classes. This is the touchstone to which every plan proposed for the improvement of the condition of the poor should be applied. If the plan be such as to co-operate with the lessons of Nature and Providence, and to encourage and promote habits of prudence and foresight, essential and permanent benefit may be expected from it: if it has no tendency of this kind, it may possibly still be good as a temporary measure, and on other accounts, but we may be quite certain that it does not apply to the source of the specific evil for which we are seeking a remedy.

Of all the plans which have yet been proposed for the assistance of the labouring classes, the saving-banks, as far as they go, appear to me much the best, and the most likely, if they should become general, to effect a permanent improvement in the condition of the lower classes of society. By giving to each individual the full and entire benefit of his own industry and prudence, they are calculated greatly to strengthen the lessons of Nature and Providence; and a

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young man, who had been saving from fourteen or fifteen with a view to marriage at four or five and twenty, or perhaps much earlier, would probably be induced to wait two or three years longer if the times were unfavourable ; if corn were high ; if wages were low ; or if the sum he had saved had been found by experience not to be sufficient to furnish a tolerable security against want. A habit of saving a portion of present earnings for future contingencies can scarcely be supposed to exist without general habits of prudence and foresight ; and if the opportunity furnished by provident banks to individuals, of reaping the full benefit of saving, should render the practice general, it might rationally be expected that, under the varying resources of the country, the population would be adjusted to the actual demand for labour, at the expense of less pain and less poverty ; and the remedy thus appears, so far as it goes, to apply to the very root of the evil.

The great object of saving-banks, however, is to prevent want and dependence by enabling the poor to provide against contingencies

contingencies themselves. And in a natural state of society, such institutions, with the aid of private charity well directed, would probably be all the means necessary to produce the best practicable effects. In the present state of things in this country the case is essentially different. With so very large a body of poor habitually dependent upon public funds, the institutions of saving-banks cannot be considered in the light of substitutes for the poor's rates. The problem how to support those who are in want in such a manner as not continually to increase the proportion which they bear to the whole society will still remain to be solved. But if any plan should be adopted either of gradually abolishing or gradually reducing and fixing the amount of the poor's rates, saving-banks would essentially assist it; at the same time that they would receive a most powerful aid in return.

In the actual state of things, they have been established at a period likely to be particularly unfavourable to them—a period of very general distress, and of the most

most extensive parochial assistance; and the success which has attended them, even under these disadvantages, seems clearly to shew, that in a period of prosperity and good wages, combined with a prospect of diminished parochial assistance, they might spread very extensively, and have a considerable effect on the general habits of the people.

With a view to give them greater encouragement at the present moment, an act has been passed allowing persons to receive parish assistance at the discretion of the justices, although they may have funds of their own under a certain amount in a saving-bank. But this is probably a short-sighted policy. It is sacrificing the principle for which saving-banks are established, to obtain an advantage which, on this very account, will be comparatively of little value. We wish to teach the labouring classes to rely more upon their own exertions and resources, as the only way of really improving their condition; yet we reward their saving by making them still dependent upon that very species of

of assistance which it is our object that they should avoid. The progress of saving-banks under such a regulation will be but an equivocal and uncertain symptom of good ; whereas without such a regulation every step would tell, every fresh deposition would prove, the growth of a desire to become independent of parish assistance ; and both the great extension of the friendly societies, and the success of the saving-banks in proportion to the time they have been established, clearly shew that much progress might be expected in these institutions under favourable circumstances, without resorting to a measure which is evidently calculated to sacrifice the end to the means.

With regard to the plans which have been talked of for reducing and limiting the poor's rates, they are certainly of a kind to apply to the root of the evil ; but they would be obviously unjust without a formal retraction of the *right* of the poor to support ; and for many years they would unquestionably be much more harsh in their operation than the plan of abolition which I have ventured to propose in a preceding chapter.

chapter. At the same time, if it be thought that this country cannot entirely get rid of a system which has been so long interwoven in its frame, a limitation of the amount of the poor's rates, or rather of their proportion to the wealth and population of the country which would be more rational and just, accompanied with a very full and fair notice of the nature of the change to be made, might be productive of essential benefit, and do much towards improving the habits and happiness of the poor.

A P P E N D I X.

1817.

SINCE the publication of the last edition of this Essay in 1807, two Works have appeared, the avowed objects of which are directly to oppose its principles and conclusions. These are *the Principles of Population and Production*, by Mr. Weyland; and *an Inquiry into the Principle of Population*, by Mr. James Grahame.

I would willingly leave the question as it at present stands to the judgment of the public, without any attempt on my part to influence it further by a more particular reply; but as I professed my readiness to enter into the discussion of any serious objections to my principles and conclusions, which were brought forward in a spirit of candour and truth; and as one at least of the publications above mentioned may be so characterized, and the other is by no means deficient in personal respect; I am induced shortly to notice them.

I should not however have thought it necessary to advert to Mr. Grahame's publication, which is a slight work without any very distinct object in view, if it did not afford some strange specimens

specimens of misrepresentation, which it may be useful to point out.

Mr. Grahame in his second chapter, speaking of the tendency exhibited by the law of human increase to a redundancy of population, observes, that some philosophers have considered this tendency as a mark of the foresight of nature, which has thus provided a ready supply for the waste of life occasioned by human vices and passions; while " others, of whom Mr. Malthus " is the leader, regard the vices and follies of " human nature, and their various products, " famine, disease and war, as *benevolent remedies* by which nature has enabled human " beings to correct the disorders that would " arise from that redundancy of population " which the unrestrained operation of her laws " would create^a."

These are the opinions imputed to me and the philosophers with whom I am associated. If the imputation were just, we have certainly on many accounts great reason to be ashamed of ourselves. For what are we made to say? In the first place, we are stated to assert that *famine* is a benevolent remedy for *want of food*, as redundancy of population admits of no other interpretation than that of a people ill supplied with the means of subsistence, and consequently

^a P. 100.

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the benevolent remedy of famine here noticed can only apply to the disorders arising from scarcity of food.

Secondly; we are said to affirm that nature enables human beings by means of diseases to correct the disorders that would arise from a redundancy of population;—that is, that mankind willingly and purposely create diseases, with a view to prevent those diseases which are the necessary consequence of a redundant population, and are not worse or more mortal than the means of prevention.

And thirdly, it is imputed to us generally, that we consider the vices and follies of mankind as benevolent remedies for the disorders arising from a redundant population; and it follows as a matter of course that these vices ought to be encouraged rather than reprobated.

It would not be easy to compress in so small a compass a greater quantity of absurdity, inconsistency, and unfounded assertion.

The two first imputations may perhaps be peculiar to Mr. Grahame; and protection from them may be found in their gross absurdity and inconsistency. With regard to the third, it must be allowed that it has not the merit of novelty. Although it is scarcely less absurd than the two others, and has been shewn to be an opinion nowhere to be found in the *Essay*, nor legitimately

to be inferred from any part of it, it has been continually repeated in various quarters for fourteen years, and now appears in the pages of Mr. Grahame. For the last time I will now notice it; and should it still continue to be brought forward, I think I may be fairly excused from paying the slightest further attention either to the imputation itself, or to those who advance it.

If I had merely stated that the tendency of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence, was kept to a level with these means by some or other of the forms of vice and misery, and that these evils were absolutely unavoidable, and incapable of being diminished by any human efforts; still I could not with any semblance of justice be accused of considering vice and misery as the remedies of these evils, instead of the very evils themselves. As well nearly might I be open to Mr. Grahame's imputations of considering the famine and disease necessarily arising from a scarcity of food as a benevolent remedy for the evils which this scarcity occasions.

But I have not so stated the proposition. I have not considered the evils of vice and misery arising from a redundant population as unavoidable, and incapable of being diminished. On the contrary I have pointed out a mode by which these evils may be removed or mitigated by removing or mitigating their cause. I have endeavoured

deavoured to shew that this may be done consistently with human virtue and happiness. I have never considered any possible increase of population as an evil, except as far as it might increase the proportion of vice and misery. Vice and misery, and these alone, are the evils which it has been my great object to contend against. I have expressly proposed moral restraint as their rational and proper remedy; and whether the remedy be good or bad, adequate or inadequate, the proposal itself, and the stress which I have laid upon it, is an incontrovertible proof that I never can have considered vice and misery as themselves remedies.

But not only does the general tenour of my work, and the specific object of the latter part of it, clearly shew that I do not consider vice and misery as remedies; but particular passages in various parts of it are so distinct on the subject, as not to admit of being misunderstood but by the most perverse blindness.

It is therefore quite inconceivable that any writer with the slightest pretension to respectability should venture to bring forward such imputations; and it must be allowed to shew either such a degree of ignorance, or such a total want of candour, as utterly to disqualify him for the discussion of such subjects.

But Mr. Grahame's misrepresentations are

not confined to the passage above referred to. In his Introduction he observes that, in order to check a redundant population, the evils of which I consider as much nearer than Mr. Wallace, I "recommend immediate recourse to human efforts, to the restraints prescribed by Condorcet, for the correction or mitigation of the evil^a." This is an assertion entirely without foundation. I have never adverted to the check suggested by Condorcet without the most marked disapprobation. Indeed I should always particularly reprobate any artificial and unnatural modes of checking population, both on account of their immorality and their tendency to remove a necessary stimulus to industry. If it were possible for each married couple to limit by a wish the number of their children, there is certainly reason to fear that the indolence of the human race would be very greatly increased; and that neither the population of individual countries, nor of the whole earth, would ever reach its natural and proper extent. But the restraints which I have recommended are quite of a different character. They are not only pointed out by reason and sanctioned by religion, but tend in the most marked manner to stimulate industry. It is not easy to conceive a more powerful en-

^a P. 18.

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couragement to exertion and good conduct than the looking forward to marriage as a state peculiarly desirable ; but only to be enjoyed in comfort, by the acquisition of habits of industry, economy and prudence. And it is in this light that I have always wished to place it ^a.

In speaking of the poor-laws in this country, and of their tendency (particularly as they have been lately administered) to eradicate all remaining spirit of independence among our peasantry, I observe that, “ hard as it may appear “ in individual instances, dependent poverty “ ought to be held disgraceful ;” by which of course I only mean that such a proper degree of pride as will induce a labouring man to make great exertions, as in Scotland, in order to prevent himself or his nearest relations from falling upon the parish, is very desirable, with a view to the happiness of the lower classes of society. The interpretation which Mr. Grahame gives to this passage is, that the rich “ are “ so to imbitter the pressure of indigence by “ the stings of contumely, that men may be “ driven by their pride to prefer even the re-“ fuge of despair to the condition of depend-

^a See vol. ii., p. 241, of 4th. edit.; p. 493 of the quarto edit.; and vol. ii., p. 241, edition of 1807.

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“ence •!!”—a curious specimen of misrepresentation and exaggeration.

I have written a chapter expressly on the practical direction of our charity; and in detached passages elsewhere have paid a just tribute to the exalted virtue of benevolence. To those who have read these parts of my work, and have attended to the general tone and spirit of the whole, I willingly appeal, if they are but tolerably candid, against these charges of Mr. Grahame, which intimate that I would root out the virtues of charity and benevolence, without regard to the exaltation which they bestow on the moral dignity of our nature; and that in my view the “rich are required only to harden their hearts against calamity, and to prevent the charitable visitings of their nature from keeping alive in them that virtue which is often the only moral link between them and their fellow-mortals.” It is not indeed easy to suppose that Mr. Grahame can have read the chapter to which I allude, as both the letter and spirit of it contradict, in the most express and remarkable manner, the imputations conveyed in the above passages.

These are a few specimens of Mr. Grahame’s

* P. 236.

^b Ibid.

misrepresentations.

misrepresentations, which might easily be multiplied; but on this subject I will only further remark that it shews no inconsiderable want of candour to continue attacking and dwelling upon passages, which have ceased to form a part of the work controverted. And this Mr. Grahame has done in more instances than one, although he could hardly fail to know that he was combating expressions and passages which I have seen reason to alter or expunge.

I really should not have thought it worth while to notice these misrepresentations of Mr. Grahame, if, in spite of them, the style and tone of his publication had not appeared to me to be entitled to more respect than most of my opponents.

With regard to the substance and aim of Mr. Grahame's work, it seems to be intended to shew that emigration is the remedy provided by nature for a redundant population; and that if this remedy cannot be adequately applied, there is no other that can be proposed, which will not lead to consequences worse than the evil itself. These are two points which I have considered at length in the Essay; and it cannot be necessary to repeat any of the arguments here. Emigration, if it could be freely used, has been shewn to be a resource, which could not be of long duration. It cannot therefore under

under any circumstances be considered as an adequate remedy. The latter position is a matter of opinion, and may rationally be held by any person who sees reason to think it well founded. It appears to me, I confess, that experience most decidedly contradicts it; but to those who think otherwise, there is nothing more to be said, than that they are bound in consistency to acquiesce in the necessary consequences of their opinion. These consequences are, that the poverty and wretchedness arising from a redundant population, or, in other words, from very low wages and want of employment, are absolutely irremediable, and must be continually increasing as the population of the earth proceeds; and that all the efforts of legislative wisdom and private charity, though they may afford a wholesome and beneficial exercise of human virtue, and may occasionally alter the distribution and vary the pressure of human misery, can do absolutely nothing towards diminishing the general amount or checking the increasing weight of this pressure.

Mr. Weyland's work is of a much more elaborate description than that of Mr. Grahame. It has also a very definite object in view: and although, when he enters into the details of his subject, he is compelled entirely to agree with me

me respecting the checks which practically keep down population to the level of the means of subsistence, and has not in fact given a single reason for the slow progress of population, in the advanced stages of society, that does not clearly and incontrovertibly come under the heads of moral restraint, vice or misery; yet it must be allowed that he sets out with a bold and distinct denial of my premises, and finishes, as he ought to do from such a beginning, by drawing the most opposite conclusions.

After stating fairly my main propositions, and adverting to the conclusion which I have drawn from them, Mr. Weyland says, “Grant-
“ ing the premises, it is indeed obvious that
“ this conclusion is undeniable.”

I desire no other concession than this; and if my premises can be shewn to rest on unsolid foundations, I will most readily give up the inferences I have drawn from them.

To determine the point here at issue it cannot be necessary for me to repeat the proofs of these premises derived both from theory and experience, which have already so fully been brought forwards. It has been allowed that they have been stated with tolerable clearness; and it is known that many persons have con-

^a Principles of Population and Production, p. 15.

sidered

sidered them as unassailable, who still refuse to admit the consequences to which they appear to lead. All that can be required therefore on the present occasion is to examine the validity of the objections to these premises brought forward by Mr. Weyland.

Mr. Weyland observes, "that the origin of "what are conceived to be the mistakes and "false reasonings, with respect to the principle "of population, appears to be the assumption "of a tendency to increase in the human spe- "cies, the quickest that can be proved pos- "sible in any particular state of society, as "that which is natural and theoretically possi- "ble in all; and the characterizing of every "cause which tends to prevent such quickest "possible rate as checks to the natural and "spontaneous tendency of population to in- "crease; but as checks evidently insufficient "to stem the progress of an overwhelming "torrent. This seems as eligible a mode of "reasoning, as if one were to assume the height "of the Irish giant as the natural standard of "the stature of man, and to call every reason, "which may be suggested as likely to pre- "vent the generality of men from reaching "it, checks to their growth."

Mr. Weyland has here most unhappily chosen his illustration, as it is in no respect applicable to the case. In order to illustrate the different rates at which population increases in different countries, by the different heights of men, the following comparison and inference would be much more to the purpose.

If in a particular country we observed that all the people had weights of different sizes upon their heads, and that invariably each individual was tall or short in proportion to the smallness or greatness of the pressure upon him; that every person was observed to grow when the weight he carried was either removed or diminished, and that the few among the whole people, who were exempted from this burden, were very decidedly taller than the rest; would it not be quite justifiable to infer, that the weights which the people carried were the cause of their being in general so short; and that the height of those without weights might fairly be considered as the standard to which it might be expected that the great mass would arrive, if their growth were unrestricted?

For what is it in fact, which we really observe with regard to the different rates of increase in different countries? Do we not see that, in almost every state to which we can direct our attention, the natural tendency to increase is repressed

repressed by the difficulty which the mass of the people find in procuring an ample portion of the necessaries of life, which shews itself more immediately in some or other of the forms of moral restraint, vice and misery? Do we not see that invariably the rates of increase are fast or slow, according as the pressure of these checks is light or heavy; and that in consequence Spain increases at one rate, France at another, England at a third, Ireland at a fourth, parts of Russia at a fifth, parts of Spanish America at a sixth, and the United States of North America at a seventh? Do we not see that, whenever the resources of any country increase, so as to create a great demand for labour and give the lower classes of society a greater command over the necessaries of life, the population of such country, though it might before have been stationary or proceeding very slowly, begins immediately to make a start forwards? And do we not see that in those few countries or districts of countries, where the pressure arising from the difficulty of procuring the necessaries and conveniences of life is almost entirely removed, and where in consequence the checks to early marriages are very few, and large families are maintained with perfect facility, the rate at which the population increases is always the greatest?

And

And when to these broad and glaring facts we add, that neither theory nor experience will justify us in believing, either that the passion between the sexes, or the natural prolificness of women, diminishes in the progress of society; when we further consider that the climate of the United States of America is not particularly healthy, and that the qualities which mainly distinguish it from other countries, are its rapid production and distribution of the means of subsistence;—is not the induction as legitimate and correct as possible, that the varying weight of the difficulties attending the maintenance of families, and the moral restraint, vice and misery which these difficulties necessarily generate, are the causes of the varying rates of increase observable in different countries; and that, so far from having any reason to consider the American rate of increase as peculiar, unnatural and gigantic, we are bound by every law of induction and analogy to conclude that there is scarcely a state in Europe where, if the marriages were as early, the means of maintaining large families as ample, and the employments of the labouring classes as healthy, the rate of increase would not be as rapid, and in some cases, I have no doubt, even more rapid, than in the United States of America?

Another

Another of Mr. Weyland's curious illustrations is the following:—He says that the *physical tendency* of a people in a commercial and manufacturing state to double their number in twenty-five years is “as absolutely gone as the “tendency of a bean to shoot up further into “the air, after it has arrived at its full growth;” and that to assume such a *tendency* is to build a theory upon a mere shadow, “which, when “brought to the test, is directly at variance “with experience of the fact; and as unsafe “to act upon, as would be that of a general “who should assume the force of a musket-“shot to be double its actual range, and then “should calculate upon the death of all his “enemies as soon as he had drawn up his “own men for battle within this line of as-“sumed efficiency.”

Now I am not in the least aware who it is that has assumed the *actual* range of the shot, or the actual progress of population in different countries, as very different from what it is observed to be; and therefore cannot see how the illustration, as brought forward by Mr. Weyland, applies, or how I can be said to resemble his miscalculating general. What I have really done is this (if he will allow me the use of his own me-

taphor) having observed that the range of musket-balls, projected from similar barrels and with the same quantity of powder of the same strength, was, under different circumstances, very different, I applied myself to consider what these circumstances were; and, having found that the range of each ball was greater or less in proportion to the smaller or greater number of the obstacles which it met with in its course, or the rarity or density of the medium through which it passed, I was led to infer that the variety of range observed was owing to these obstacles; and I consequently thought it a more correct and legitimate conclusion, and one more consonant both to theory and experience, to say that the *natural tendency* to a range of a certain extent, or the force impressed upon the ball, was always the same, and the actual range, whether long or short, only altered by external resistance; than to conclude that the different distances to which the balls reached must proceed from some mysterious change in the *natural tendency* of each bullet at different times, although no observable difference could be noticed either in the barrel or the charge.

I leave Mr. Weyland to determine which would be the conclusion of the natural philosopher, who was observing the different velocities

cities and ranges of projectiles passing through resisting media; and I do not see why the moral and political philosopher should proceed upon principles so totally opposite.

But the only arguments of Mr. Weyland against the *natural tendency* of the human race to increase faster than the means of subsistence, are a few of these illustrations which he has so unhappily applied, together with the acknowledged fact, that countries under different circumstances and in different stages of their progress, do really increase at very different rates.

Without dwelling therefore longer on such illustrations, it may be observed, with regard to the fact of the different rates of increase in different countries, that as long as it is a law of our nature that man cannot live without food, these different rates are as absolutely and strictly *necessary* as the differences in the power of producing food in countries more or less exhausted; and that to infer from these different rates of increase, as they are actually found to take place, that "population has a " *natural tendency* to keep within the powers " of the soil to afford it subsistence in every " gradation through which society passes," is just as rational as to infer that every man has a *natural tendency* to remain in prison who is necessarily

necessarily confined to it by four strong walls ; or that the pine of the crowded Norwegian forest has no *natural* tendency to shoot out lateral branches, because there is no room for their growth. And yet this is Mr. Weyland's first and grand proposition, on which the whole of his work turns !!!

But though Mr. Weyland has not proved, or approached towards proving, that the *natural* tendency of population to increase is not unlimited ; though he has not advanced a single reason to make it appear probable that a thousand millions would not be doubled in twenty-five years just as easily as a thousand, if moral restraint, vice and misery, were equally removed in both cases ; yet there is one part of his argument, which undoubtedly might under certain circumstances be true ; and if true, though it would in no respect impeach the premises of the Essay, it would essentially affect some of its conclusions.

The argument may be stated shortly thus ;— that the natural division of labour arising from a very advanced state of society, particularly in countries where the land is rich, and great improvements have taken place in agriculture, might throw so large a portion of the people into towns, and engage so many in unhealthy occupations, that the immediate checks to po-

pulation might be too powerful to be overcome even by an abundance of food.

It is admitted that this is a possible case; and, foreseeing this possibility, I provided for it in the terms in which the second proposition of the Essay was enunciated.

The only practical question then worth attending to between me and Mr. Weyland is, whether cases of the kind above stated are to be considered in the light in which I have considered them in the Essay, as exceptions of very rare occurrence, or in the light in which Mr. Weyland has considered them, as a state of things naturally accompanying every stage in the progress of improvement. On either supposition, population would still be repressed by some or other of the forms of moral restraint, vice or misery; but the moral and political conclusions, in the actual state of almost all countries, would be essentially different. On the one supposition moral restraint would, except in a few cases of the rarest occurrence, be one of the most useful and necessary of virtues; and on the other, it would be one of the most useless and unnecessary.

This question can only be determined by an appeal to experience. Mr. Weyland is always ready to refer to the state of this country; and, in fact, may be said almost to have built his system

system upon the peculiar policy of a single state. But the reference in this case will entirely contradict his theory. He has brought forward some elaborate calculations to shew the extreme difficulty with which the births of the country supply the demands of the towns and manufactories. In looking over them, the reader, without other information, would be disposed to feel considerable alarm at the prospect of depopulation impending over the country; or at least he would be convinced that we were within a hair's breadth of that formidable point of *non-reproduction*, at which, according to Mr. Weyland, the population *naturally* comes to a full stop before the means of subsistence cease to be progressive.

These calculations were certainly as applicable twenty years ago as they are now; and indeed they are chiefly founded on observations which were made at a greater distance of time than the period here noticed. But what has happened since? In spite of the enlargement of all our towns; in spite of the most rapid increase of manufactories, and of the proportion of people employed in them; in spite of the most extraordinary and unusual demands for the army and navy; in short, in spite of a state of things which, according to Mr. Weyland's theory, ought to have brought us long since to the

point of *non-reproduction*, the population of the country has advanced at a rate more rapid than was ever known at any period of its history. During the ten years from 1800 to 1811, as I have mentioned in a former part of this work, the population of this country (even after making an allowance for the presumed deficiency of the returns in the first enumeration) increased at a rate which would double its numbers in fifty-five years.

This fact appears to me at once a full and complete refutation of the doctrine, that, as society advances, the increased indisposition to marriage and increased mortality in great towns and manufactories always overcome the principle of increase; and that, in the language of Mr. Weyland, “population, so far from having “an inconvenient tendency uniformly to press “against the means of subsistence, becomes “by degrees very slow in overtaking those “means.”

With this acknowledged and glaring fact before him, and with the most striking evidences staring him in the face, that even, during this period of rapid increase, thousands both in the country and in towns were prevented from marrying so early as they would have done, if they had possessed sufficient means of supporting a family independently of parish

parish relief, it is quite inconceivable how a man of sense could bewilder himself in such a maze of futile calculations, and come to a conclusion so diametrically opposite to experience.

The fact already noticed, as it applies to the most advanced stage of society known in Europe, and proves incontrovertibly that the actual checks to population, even in the most improved countries, arise principally from an insufficiency of subsistence, and soon yield to increased resources, notwithstanding the increase of towns and manufactories, may I think fairly be considered as quite decisive of the question at issue.

But in treating of so general and extensive a subject as the Principle of Population, it would surely not be just to take our examples and illustrations only from a single state. And in looking at the other countries Mr. Weyland's doctrine on population is, if possible, still more completely contradicted. Where, I would ask, are the great towns and manufactories in Switzerland, Norway and Sweden, which are to act as *the graves of mankind*, and to prevent the possibility of a redundant population? In Sweden the proportion of the people living in the country is to those who live in town as 13 to 1; in England this proportion is about 2 to 1; and yet England increases much faster than Sweden. How is this

this to be reconciled with the doctrine that the progress of civilization and improvement is always accompanied by a correspondent abatement in the natural tendency of population to increase? Norway, Sweden and Switzerland have not on the whole been ill governed; but where are the necessary "anticipating alterations," which, according to Mr. Weyland, arise in every society as the powers of the soil diminish, and "render so many persons unwilling to marry, and so many more, who do marry, incapable of reproducing their own numbers, and of replacing the deficiency in the remainder"? What is it that in these countries indisposes people to marry, but the absolute hopelessness of being able to support their families? What is it that renders many more who do marry incapable of reproducing their own numbers, but the diseases generated by excessive poverty—by an insufficient supply of the necessaries of life? Can any man of reflection look at these and many of the other countries of Europe, and then venture to state that there is no moral reason for repressing the inclination to early marriages; when it cannot be denied that the alternative of not repressing it must necessarily and unavoidably be premature mortality from excessive poverty? And

* P. 124.

is it possible to know that in few or none of the countries of Europe the wages of labour, determined in the common way by the supply and the demand, can support in health large families; and yet assert that population does not press against the means of subsistence, and that “the evils of a redundant population can “never be necessarily felt by a country till it “is actually peopled up to the full capacity of “its resources^a?“.

Mr. Weyland really appears to have dictated his book with his eyes blindfolded and his ears stopped. I have a great respect for his character and intentions; but I must say that it has never been my fortune to meet with a theory so uniformly contradicted by experience. The very slightest glance at the different countries of Europe shews with a force amounting to demonstration, that to all practical purposes the *natural tendency* of population to increase may be considered as a given quantity; and that the actual increase is regulated by the varying resources of each country for the employment and maintenance of labour, in whatever stage of its progress it may be, whether it is agricultural or manufacturing, whether it has few or many towns. Of course this actual increase, or the actual limits of po-

^a P. 123.

pulation

pulation, must always be far short of the utmost powers of the earth to produce food ; first, because we can never rationally suppose that the human skill and industry actually exerted are directed in the best *possible* manner towards the production of food ; and secondly, because as I have stated more particularly in a former part of this work, the greatest production of food which the powers of the earth would admit cannot possibly take place under a system of private property. But this acknowledged truth obviously affects only the actual quantity of food and the actual number of people, and has not the most distant relation to the question respecting the *natural tendency* of population to increase beyond the powers of the earth to produce food for it.

The observations already made are sufficient to shew that the four main propositions of Mr. Weyland, which depend upon the first, are quite unsupported by any appearances in the state of human society, as it is known to us in the countries with which we are acquainted. The last of these four propositions is the following :—“ This tendency” (meaning the natural tendency of population to keep within the powers of the soil to afford it subsistence) “ will have “ its complete operation so as constantly to “ maintain the people in comfort and plenty in “ proportion

" proportion as religion, morality, rational liberty and security of person and property approach the attainment of a perfect influence".

In the morality here noticed, moral or prudential restraint from marriage is not included: and so understood, I have no hesitation in saying that this proposition appears to me more directly to contradict the observed laws of nature than to assert that Norway might easily grow food for a thousand millions of inhabitants. I trust that I am disposed to attach as much importance to the effects of morality and religion on the happiness of society, even as Mr. Weyland; but among the moral duties, I certainly include a restraint upon the inclination to an early marriage when there is no reasonable prospect of maintenance for a family; and unless this species of virtuous self-denial be included in morality, I am quite at issue with Mr. Weyland; and so distinctly deny his proposition as to say that no degree of religion and morality, no degree of rational liberty and security of person and property, can under the existing laws of nature place the lower classes of society in a state of comfort and plenty.

With regard to Mr. Weyland's fifth and last proposition^b, I have already answered it in a

^a C. iii. p. 21.

^b Id. 22.

note which I have added, in the present edition, to the last chapter of the third book^a, and will only observe here that an illustration to shew the precedence of population to food, which I believe was first brought forward by an anonymous writer, and appears so to have pleased Mr. Grahame as to induce him to repeat it twice, is one which I would willingly take to prove the very opposite doctrine to that which it was meant to support. The apprehension that an increasing population would starve^b unless a previous increase of food were procured for it, has been ridiculed by comparing it with the apprehension that increasing numbers would be obliged to go naked unless a previous increase of clothes should precede their births. Now however well or ill-founded may be our apprehensions in the former case, they are certainly quite justifiable in the latter; at least society has always acted as if it thought so. In the course of the next twenty-four hours there will be about 800 children born in England and Wales; and I will venture to say that there are not ten out of the whole number that come at the expected time, for whom clothes are not prepared before their births. It is said to be dangerous to meddle with edged tools

^a P. 245, et seq.

^b This I have never said; I have only said that their condition would be deteriorated, which is strictly true.

which

which we do not know how to handle; and it is equally dangerous to meddle with illustrations which we do not know how to apply, and which may tend to prove exactly the reverse of what we wish.

On Mr. Weyland's theory it will not be necessary further to enlarge. With regard to the practical conclusions which he has drawn from it in our own country, they are such as might be expected from the nature of the premises. If population, instead of having a tendency to press against the means of subsistence, becomes by degrees very slow in overtaking them, Mr. Weyland's inference that we ought to encourage the increase of the labouring classes by abundant parochial assistance to families, might perhaps be maintained. But if his premises be entirely wrong, while his conclusions are still acted upon, the consequence must be, that universal system of unnecessary pauperism and dependence which we now so much deplore. Already above one-fourth of the population of England and Wales are regularly dependent upon parish relief; and if the system which Mr. Weyland recommends, and which has been so generally adopted in the midland counties, should extend itself over the whole kingdom, there is really no saying to what height the level of pauperism may rise. While the system of making an allowance from the

the parish for every child above two is confined to the labourers in agriculture, whom Mr. Weyland considers as the breeders of the country, it is essentially unjust, as it lowers without compensation the wages of the manufacturer and artificer: and when it shall become just by including the whole of the working classes, what a dreadful picture does it present! what a scene of equality, indolence, rags and dependence, among one-half or three-fourths of the society! Under such a system to expect any essential benefit from *saving banks* or any other institutions to promote industry and economy is perfectly preposterous. When the wages of labour are reduced to the level to which this system tends, there will be neither power nor motive to save.

Mr. Weyland strangely attributes much of the wealth and prosperity of England to the cheap population which it raises by means of the poor-laws; and seems to think that, if labour had been allowed to settle at its natural rate, and all workmen had been paid in proportion to their skill and industry, whether with or without families, we should never have attained that commercial and manufacturing ascendancy by which we have been so eminently distinguished.

A practical refutation of so ill-founded an opinion

opinion may be seen in the state of Scotland, which in proportion to its natural resources has certainly increased in agriculture, manufactures and commerce, during the last fifty years, still more rapidly than England, although it may fairly be said to have been essentially without poor-laws.

It is not easy to determine what is the price of labour most favourable to the progress of wealth. It is certainly conceivable that it may be too high for the prosperity of foreign commerce. But I believe it is much more frequently too low; and I doubt if there has ever been an instance in any country of very great prosperity in foreign commerce, where the working classes have not had good money wages. It is impossible to sell very largely without being able to buy very largely; and no country can buy very largely in which the working classes are not in such a state as to be able to purchase foreign commodities.

But nothing tends to place the lower classes of society in this state so much as a demand for labour which is allowed to take its natural course, and which therefore pays the unmarried man and the man with a family at the same rate; and consequently gives at once to a very large mass of the working classes the power of purchasing foreign articles of consumption, and
of

of paying taxes on luxuries to no inconsiderable extent. While, on the other hand, nothing would tend so effectually to destroy the power of the working classes of society to purchase either home manufactures or foreign articles of consumption, or to pay taxes on luxuries, as the practice of doling out to each member of a family an allowance, in the shape of wages and parish relief combined, just sufficient, or only a very little more than to furnish them with the mere food necessary for their maintenance.

To shew that, in looking forward to such an increased operation of prudential restraint as would greatly improve the condition of the poor, it is not necessary to suppose extravagant and impossible wages, as Mr. Weyland seems to think, I will refer to the proposition of a practical man on the subject of the price of labour; and certainly much would be done, if this proposition could be realized, though it must be effected in a very different way from that which he has proposed.

It has been recommended by Mr. Arthur Young so to adjust the wages of day-labour as to make them at all times equivalent to the purchase of a peck of wheat. This quantity, he says, was earned by country labourers during a considerable period of the last century, when
the

the poor-rates were low, and not granted to assist in the maintenance of those who were able to work. And he goes on to observe that, “as the labourer would (in this case) receive 70 bushels of wheat for 47 weeks’ labour, exclusive of five weeks for harvest; and as a family of six persons consumes in a year no more than 48 bushels; it is clear that such wages of labour would cut off every pretence of parochial assistance; and of necessity the conclusion would follow, that all right to it in men thus paid should be annihilated for ever^a. ”

An adjustment of this kind, either enforced by law or used as a guide in the distribution of parish assistance, as suggested by Mr. Young, would be open to insuperable objections. At particular times it might be the means of converting a dearth into a famine. And in its general operation, and supposing no change of habits among the labouring classes, it would be tantamount to saying that, under all circumstances, whether the affairs of the country were prosperous or adverse; whether its resources in land were still great, or nearly exhausted; the population ought to increase exactly at the same rate,—a conclusion which involves an impossibility.

If however this adjustment, instead of being

^a Annals of Agriculture, No. 270, p. 91, note.

enforced

enforced by law, were produced by the increasing operation of the prudential check to marriage, the effect would be totally different, and in the highest degree beneficial to society. A gradual change in the habits of the labouring classes would then effect the necessary retardation in the rate of increase, and would proportion the supply of labour to the effective demand, as society continued to advance, not only without the pressure of a diminishing quantity of food, but under the enjoyment of an increased quantity of conveniences and comforts; and in the progress of cultivation and wealth the condition of the lower classes of society would be in a state of constant improvement.

A peck of wheat a day cannot be considered in any light as excessive wages. In the early periods of cultivation, indeed, when corn is low in exchangeable value, much more is frequently earned; but in such a country as England, where the price of corn, compared with manufactures and foreign commodities, is high, it would do much towards placing the great mass of the labouring classes in a state of comparative comfort and independence; and it would be extremely desirable, with a view to the virtue and happiness of human society, that no land should be taken into cultivation

that

that could not pay the labourers employed upon it to this amount.

With these wages as the average minimum, all those who were unmarried, or, being married, had small families, would be extremely well off; while those who had large families, though they would unquestionably be subjected sometimes to a severe pressure, would in general be able, by the sacrifice of conveniences and comforts, to support themselves without parish assistance. And not only would the amount and distribution of the wages of labour greatly increase the stimulus to industry and economy throughout all the working classes of the society, and place the great body of them in a very superior situation, but it would furnish them with the means of making an effectual demand for a great amount of foreign commodities and domestic manufactures, and thus, at the same time that it would promote individual and general happiness, would advance the mercantile and manufacturing prosperity of the country^a.

Mr. Weyland,

^a The merchants and manufacturers who so loudly clamour for cheap corn and low money wages, think only of selling their commodities abroad, and often forget that they have to find a market for their returns at home, which they can never do to any great extent, when the

Mr. Weyland, however, finds it utterly impossible to reconcile the necessity of moral restraint either with the nature of man, or the plain dictates of religion on the subject of marriage. Whether the check to population, which he would substitute for it, is more consistent with the nature of a rational being, the precepts of revelation, and the benevolence of the Deity, must be left to the judgment of the reader. This check, it is already known, is no other than the unhealthiness and mortality of towns and manufactories^a. And though I have never felt any difficulty in reconciling to the goodness of the Deity the necessity of practising the virtue of moral restraint in a state allowed to be a state of discipline and trial; yet I confess that I could make no attempt to reason on the subject, if I were obliged to believe, with Mr. Weyland, that a large proportion of the

money wages of the working classes, and monied incomes in general, are low. One of the principal causes of the check which foreign commerce has experienced during the last two or three years, has been the great diminution of the home market for foreign produce.

^a With regard to the indisposition to marriage in towns, I do not believe that it is greater than in the country, except as far as it arises from the greater expense of maintaining a family, and the greater facility of illicit intercourse.

human race was doomed by the inscrutable ordinations of Providence to a premature death in large towns.

If indeed such peculiar unhealthiness and mortality were the proper and natural check to the progress of population in the advanced stages of society, we should justly have reason to apprehend that, by improving the healthiness of our towns and manufactories, as we have done in England during the last twenty years, we might really defeat the designs of Providence. And though I have too much respect for Mr. Weyland to suppose that he would deprecate all attempts to diminish the mortality of towns, and render manufactories less destructive to the health of the children employed in them; yet certainly his principles lead to this conclusion, since his theory has been completely destroyed by those laudable efforts which have made the mortality of England—a country abounding in towns and manufactories, less than the mortality of Sweden—a country in a state almost purely agricultural.

It was my object in the two chapters on *Moral Restraint*, and its *Effects on Society*, to shew that the evils arising from the principle of population were exactly of the same nature as the evils arising from the excessive or irregular gratification of the human passions in general; and

and that from the existence of these evils we had no more reason to conclude that the principle of increase was too strong for the purpose intended by the Creator, than to infer, from the existence of the vices arising from the human passions, that these passions required diminution or extinction, instead of regulation and direction.

If this view of the subject be allowed to be correct, it will naturally follow that, notwithstanding the acknowledged evils occasioned by the principle of population, the advantages derived from it under the present constitution of things may very greatly overbalance them.

A slight sketch of the nature of these advantages, as far as the main object of the Essay would allow, was given in the two chapters to which I have alluded; but the subject has lately been pursued with considerable ability in the Work of Mr. Sumner on the Records of the Creation; and I am happy to refer to it as containing a masterly developement and completion of views, of which only an intimation could be given in the Essay.

I fully agree with Mr. Sumner as to the beneficial effects which result from the principle of population, and feel entirely convinced that the natural tendency of the human race to increase faster than the possible increase of the means of

of subsistence could not be either destroyed or essentially diminished without diminishing that hope of rising and fear of falling in society, so necessary to the improvement of the human faculties and the advancement of human happiness. But with this conviction on my mind, I feel no wish to alter the view which I have given of the evils arising from the principle of population. These evils do not lose their name or nature because they are overbalanced by good: and to consider them in a different light on this account, and cease to call them evils, would be as irrational as the objecting to call the irregular indulgences of passion vicious, and to affirm that they lead to misery, because our passions are the main sources of human virtue and happiness.

I have always considered the principle of population as a law peculiarly suited to a state of discipline and trial. Indeed I believe that, in the whole range of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted, not one can be pointed out, which in so remarkable a manner tends to strengthen and confirm this scriptural view of the state of man on earth. And as each individual has the power of avoiding the evil consequences to himself and society resulting from the principle of population by the practice of a virtue clearly dictated to him by the light of nature,

nature, and sanctioned by revealed religion, it must be allowed that the ways of God to man with regard to this great law of nature are completely vindicated.

I have, therefore, certainly felt surprise as well as regret that no inconsiderable part of the objections which have been made to the principles and conclusions of the Essay on Population has come from persons for whose moral and religious character I have so high a respect, that it would have been particularly gratifying to me to obtain their approbation and sanction. This effect has been attributed to some expressions used in the course of the work which have been thought too harsh, and not sufficiently indulgent to the weaknesses of human nature, and the feelings of Christian charity.

It is probable, that having found the bow bent too much one way, I was induced to bend it too much the other, in order to make it straight. But I shall always be quite ready to blot out any part of the work which is considered by a competent tribunal as having a tendency to prevent the bow from becoming finally straight, and to impede the progress of truth. In deference to this tribunal I have already expunged the passages which have been most objected to, and I have made some few further corrections of the same kind in the present edition.

edition. By these alterations I hope and believe that the work has been improved without impairing its principles. But I still trust that whether it is read with or without these alterations, every reader of candour must acknowledge that the practical design uppermost in the mind of the writer, with whatever want of judgment it may have been executed, is to improve the condition and increase the happiness of the lower classes of society.

FINIS.

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